THE VOICE OF BRITISH MOTORSPORT

MOTORSPORT NEWS

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EXCLUSIVE Q&A

SCOTT AND ROGER MORAN

The kings of hillclimbing tackle the MN readers' questions ***p16***

Toyota GB team gunning for gold in the UK's premier tin-top championship this season

REVAMPED SPEEDWORKS TOYOTA BTCC LINE-UP TO GUN FOR GLORY IN 2023

EXCLUSIVE

Speedworks will go on the title attack in 2023

New line-up: Collard, Butcher and Gamble

By Matt James

Speedworks Motorsport has revealed an expanded three-car Toyota Corolla British Touring Car Championship attack for 2023 and it has put the title silverware firmly in its sights.

Rory Butcher and Ricky Collard will return to handle the front-wheel-drive hatchback, and they will be joined in the line-up by new recruit George Gamble, who will make his debut for the squad after a race-winning rookie season in a BMW in 2022.

The team will also switch to using a bespoke Neil Brown Engineering-developed two-litre turbocharged powerplant for the first time.

Team principal Christian Dick said: "We have all the elements in place to mount our most serious attack on the championship yet. I think we have one of the strongest driver line-ups on the grid and we have put some huge investment into the entire programme. There are some exciting times ahead."

The opening rounds of this season's British Touring Car Championship take place at Donington Park on April 22-23.

Full story, page 15

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NEWS

BRIT BUTTON STRUGGLES ON NASCAR BOW

British ace has his eyes opened in stockcar, ***p5***

REPORT

PRICE MAKES A WINNING RALLY COMEBACK

Ford Escort Mk2 man to the fore in North Wales ***p23***

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FASTCAR ENTERTAINMENT

COMMENT

Photo: Motorsport Images,Gary Craig, Paul Lawrence, mkpics.net

McLaren's form so far in 2023 has been extremely disappointing for the team bosses

WHY McLAREN NEEDS A BOUNCE

There aren't too many similarities between Premier League football and Formula 1, but the high-profile team principal and technical director merry-go-round is beginning to resemble the hire-and-fire nature of the beautiful game. The latest backroom shuffles have taken place at McLaren after its disastrous start to the 2023 campaign and technical director James Key has fallen on his sword.

Team boss Zak Brown has said that the switch around in the management structure is nothing to do with the shoddy performances so far this season, but it is hard not to draw a link between the two. So far, the team's best result has been a 14th position in Saudi Arabia, which is a long way from where the iconic team expects to be – especially as it is powered by a Mercedes engine.

Brown said that the changes to the backroom staff had been planned towards the end of last year, but even that would have been too late to rescue the prospects of the MCL60 chassis. McLaren is one of the most recognisable names in the Formula 1 line-up and it is sad to see it struggling so much. Hopefully, the three new recruits to steer the technical team can help reverse the current slump.

Last year, British rising star Lando Norris put pen to paper on a long-term deal with McLaren, and the Woking team went through hell and high water to secure the signature of Oscar Piastri. Those two will be as keen as anyone for the results to turn around, otherwise their prospects of a long and fruitful career will be severely diminished.

In this issue, we also reveal the route of the Roger Albert Clark Rally in November, with Paul Lawrence's exclusive insight on page 14. It is scheduled to be one of the motorsport highlights of the UK season and book some time off in November to get into the forests and watch some of the sport's most mouth-watering cars and some highly talented drivers.

We lift the lid on the new Speedworks Motorsport line-up for this year's British Touring Car Championship, and we also feature all the national racing and rallying thrills from last weekend, including Joe Price's impressive British Historic Rally Championship victory on the North Wales Rally.

The subjects of our readers' question-and-answer spotlight this week is a unique pair, Roger and Scott Moran. The father-and-son pair are both title winners in the British Hillclimb Championship, and both have branched out into other areas of the sport too. Theirs is a passion for motorsport unmatched by many, and their answers to the posers are fascinating.

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Photos: Motorsport Images

James Key has left McLaren after its recent slump in performance

McLaren has struggled so far this season

McLAREN REVAMPS TECHNICAL LINE-UP AFTER DISAPPOINTING EARLY-SEASON FORM

Backroom shake-up for British team as it seeks to make rapid progress towards the front of F1 pack

By Matt James

The McLaren Formula 1 team will have a revised design structure after the departure of technical director James Key last week.

McLaren has yet to register a point in the 2023 season and sits at the bottom of the constructors' table after two rounds with a best finish of 15th position, which was claimed by Oscar Piastri in Saudi Arabia. McLaren finished third in the teams' contest in 2020, but has slipped further down the order in recent seasons.

While the team has said that the changes were planned before the green light to the 2023 campaign as its form has slumped in the last couple of years, it has also admitted that there were engineering mistakes in its Mercedes-powered MCL60 machine.

Former Ferrari man David Sanchez, the Italian team's former head of vehicle concept, has joined McLaren in a similar role and he has been joined by two staff members promoted from within McLaren: Peter Prodromou will focus on the aerodynamics and Neil Houldey will concentrate on engineering and design. Sanchez will take up his new position at the start of 2024.

All three will work under Andrea Stella, who took over from Andreas Seidl who departed the team in December last year.

Stella said: "Since taking on the team principal role, I have been given the mandate to take a strategic approach to ensure the team is set on a long-term foundation, for us to build on over the years. This new structure provides clarity and effectiveness within the team's technical department and puts us in a strong position to maximise performance, including optimising the new infrastructure upgrades we have coming in 2023."

McLaren's CEO Zak Brown added: "It has been clear to me for some time that our technical development has not moved at a quick enough pace to match our ambition of returning to the front of the grid.

"I'm pleased that, having completed a full review with Andrea, we are now able to implement the restructure required to set the wheels in motion to turn this around. These strategic changes ensure the long-term success of the team and are necessary to see McLaren get back to winning ways."

IN BRIEF

No F1 for Porsche

Reports have indicated that Porsche has shelved its plans to join the grand prix grid from 2026 as an engine supplier. The German firm was in talks with both Red Bull and McLaren, but its desire to take a significant shareholding of the team it was going to partner with put stumbling blocks in the way of any agreement. Porsche will now concentrate on its other motorsport activities including the new 963 Hypercar and its Formula E programme.

Tyres for tender

The FIA has issued an invitation to tender for tyre suppliers for the Formula 1 deal from 2025 onwards. Pirelli has been the control rubber provider since 2011 and is expected to tender again, and the firm which wins the contract will also supply the Formula 2 and Formula 3 tyres. While the FIA's brief requires tyres with the same characteristics as the current rubber, it has encouraged the tenders to give evidence of the environmental impact of their manufacturing processes.

Piquet Senior fined

Three-time Formula 1 World champion Nelson Piquet has been ordered to pay £780,000 by a court for homophobic and racist comments he made last year about Lewis Hamilton. The 70-year-old was cited for his comments by human rights groups in his native Brazil and the 1981, 1983 and 1987 title winner – who has been banned from the F1 paddock as a result of his comments – has been forced to pay up.

Smaller teams could benefit

PUSH TO LEVEL UP THE COST-CAP LIMITATIONS FOR SMALL TEAMS

Formula 1 bosses are said to be considering changes to the budget cap restrictions in a bid to help grand prix racing's smaller teams to catch up to the more dominant squads.

The tweaks are said to centre around allowing less successful teams to invest in factory infrastructure. That is currently included in the cost cap, but there talks due to take place about freeing up this aspect to permit development.

Autosport says the moves are thought to have been driven by new Williams team principal James Vowles, The former Mercedes man has spotted the huge disparity since taking up his new role. He said: "I personally think if we want a meritocracy, we need the ability for my team to be given the chance to catch up with some of the big teams and have the same resources."

Those views were echoed by Alpine chief Otmar Szafnauer, who added: "What a cost cap does is it solidifies some inherent inequities. If you were a small team and didn't have a great windtunnel, for example, and you couldn't build one, you're screwed forever. That is why there's dispensation for new tunnels.

"There are other infrastructure and tools underneath the tunnel that should be treated the same."

HORNER: RED BULL NEEDS TO PRESS HOME PACE

Red Bull has been streets ahead of the F1 opposition so far this year

Red Bull team boss Christian Horner has said that the Milton Keynes-based team needs to push hard at the beginning of this year's grand prix campaign before any impact on its restriction on windtunnel time might take effect.

Red Bull, which has taken a 1-2 finish in the opening two grands prix of the year with Max Verstappen and Sergio Perez sharing the wins, was hit with a 10% reduction in its permitted aero development for 12 months since a cost-cap censure was imposed in October last year. While that had limited impact on this year's season-starting RB19, it is likely cause problems as other squads catch up with more development potential this year. Horner said the strong start was crucial for 2023. "The venues vary a great deal, so I'm sure it's going to ebb and flow," said Horner. "But we're hopeful that we can extract more performance from the car.

"It's only the second year of these new regulations so I'm expecting to see an awful lot of convergence during the course of the year, and the grid is going to tighten up. We need to make hay while the sun shines at the moment while we've got a competitive car, and just keep pushing through the season."

Chester has a new F1 role

CHESTER IN PLACE TO KICKSTART ANDRETTI

Former Renault Formula 1 technical director Nick Chester has joined Andretti ahead of its proposed entry into grand prix racing in 2026.

Andretti has expressed an interest in joining the F1 grid and has the backing of General Motors, which would badge a Cadillac engine. Chester switched from Renault to a role in Mercedes' Formula E operation, which was recently taken over by McLaren. Chester's key role is to assemble a technical and engineering team to work on the nascent programme, and he would initially be based in Banbury.

His former boss Ian James, who Chester worked with at the Mercedes and McLaren FE teams, said: "[Nick has] just got a great approach to be able to take on some fairly meaty challenges, but at the same time, not let that be in any way, shape or form overwhelming."

The FIA has requested expressions of interest from those who would aim to join the grand prix grid and the closing date is set at April 30. The results are due to be revealed on June 30.

Podium at Le Mans

GLICKENHAUS TO SIDESTEP NURBURGRING 24 HOURS 2023

American sportscar brand Glickenhaus will miss the Nurburgring 24 Hours for the first time in nine seasons as it ramps up its preparations for the Le Mans event.

The sportscar maker says the demands of racing in the twice-around-the-clock race in Germany, which will take place on May 20-21 – just three weeks before the Le Mans 24 Hours – were too much in terms of preparations and it would instead concentrate on the World Endurance Championship.

Glickenhaus runs a car for Ryan Briscoe, Romain Dumas and Olivier Pla in the World Endurance Championship and will expand to a second machine for the 100th anniversary race at Le Mans with Franck Mailleux as the only confirmed racer so far. Glickenhaus finished third at Le Mans last season with the 007 machine driven by Mailleux, Briscoe and Briton Richard Westbrook.

Jim Glickenhaus told Autosport: “We’re not going to race at the ’Ring this year because we have to concentrate on the WEC. We did do both in 2021 and ’22, but it was a real stretch.”

He also added that the firm would aim to return to the German endurance event, although no timeframe had been set. “It could be next year,” he added.

Photos: Motorsport Images

BUTTON: THERE’S MORE TO LEARN TO CONQUER NASCAR

British F1 champion admits to struggles on tin-top debut in the USA

Button in his Ford NASCAR machine

Raikkonen collided with Button

Jenson struggled for a rhythm

By Matt James

Formula 1 World champion Jenson Button says he has a lot to learn after finishing in 18th position on his NASCAR debut at the Circuit of the Americas last weekend.

The 2009 World beater was taking part in his Rick Ware Racing Ford and is due to take part in two more road course events. Kimi Raikkonen also tackled the event, which was his return to the stockcar category, and the Finn took a 29th-place finish after early contact with Button.

Button said that he took a long time to get into the rhythm of the tin-top racer and changes made mid-race made his life even tougher.

Button, 43, said: “It was an emotional roller coaster. I was just like, ‘Everyone: Go. I just need to drive and find a rhythm.’ I’ve never gone through a corner too wide so often.

“And trying to place my car in the right place – I just got it wrong every time. Normally, if you’re a little bit slow through a corner, nobody tries to overtake you from the outside. But here they do, because they get a wheel inside for the next one, and if you turn in, you turn around.”

There were three restarts in the race and plenty for the Briton to cope with, plus the mid-race clash with Raikkonen

“I a had a massive whack from Kimi, and [the car] fell off [handling-wise] after that. The car wasn’t quite right. Every time I turned in, the rear tyres would chatter, then immediately to oversteer. It was really difficult, but towards the end, we made some good calls stopping and putting on fresh tyres. I enjoyed the last three restarts – got good placement and good overtaking moves from the outside.”

Button will make his next NASCAR Cup Series appearance at the Chicago Street Course race on July 2. The race was won by Toyota driver Tyler Reddick who headed home Kyle Busch and Alex Bowman.

ARGENTINE ROUND OF INDYCAR IN THE PIPELINE

IndyCar officials have visited Argentina to look at the prospects of taking the USA premier single-seater category to the country in the future.

IndyCar held a demonstration event in the nation in November last year and a track visit and talks are now progressing on a championship round at the Termas de Rio Hondo venue.

IndyCar has raced in Argentina before, back in 1971. Negotiations are centring around a return in 2024.

Speaking to Autosport, IndyCar president Jay Frye said: “We appreciate the interest of everyone who went to see that, the two exhibitions. Everything that we saw was an incredible event.

“Never say never [in terms of the chances of hosting a race in Argentina]. Again, I think it was a really good thing.

“And as I mentioned, we didn’t know what to expect, but everything we expected [during the visit and the crowd reaction], it was exceeded. It was amazing.”

The IndyCar racers could be headed for a return to race in Argentina during 2024

FORMULA E: SAO PAULO EPRIX BY SAM SMITH **MARCH 25**

EVANS HEADS HOME A BIG CAT 1-2-3 IN SAO PAULO

Mitch Evans (l) jumps Nick Cassidy for top spot

Champ Stoffel Vandoorne regretted early lead...

Mitch Evans claimed victory in a tense inaugural Sao Paulo ePrix held on the site of the Brazilian IndyCar street circuit that ran from 2010 to 2013.

The Jaguar TCS driver overturned his miserable start to the season that had left him with just 14 points collated from the first five races. The Kiwi led home a Jaguar powered 1-2-3 with Nick Cassidy’s Big Cat-powered Envision Racing entry second and Evans’ Jaguar TCS team-mate Sam Bird in third position.

The race was held in sweltering conditions that peaked at 100 degrees Celsius on a track that was always going to provide a genuine energy management race.

That meant polesitter Stoffel Vandoorne was actually at a disadvantage in leading the early phase of the race, which was broken up with two safety car periods. These were deployed to clear up the wreckage from separate shunts involving Nissan pair Norman Nato and Sacha Fenestraz.

This triggered a variety of strategies to play out, but one constant was Evans in the top three positions as multiple lead changes played out as drivers and teams juggled the offset of fighting for position with recovering and managing their usable energy.

After Vandoorne led the early stages, essentially dictating the pace, he knew he was on a hiding to nothing. The reigning Formula E champion told Motorsport News: “I knew this race was not good to be leading.

“It’s a bit strange to go to a car race and say that leading is not good but the way this racing goes in Formula E with the slipstream effect and the energy management we have to do, it was not good to be in the lead.”

Fellow front-row starter Antonio Felix da Costa looked to be new leader Evans’ main threat but a lock-up at Turn 1 negated his hard work and he fell back to an eventual fourth.

It became clear in the second half of the race that Jaguar held the ace cars as Nick Cassidy spent a tranche of the 35 laps in the lead. But he was overcome by Evans’ pace in the latter stages.

The race boiled down to a mini sprint in the final laps as the two Kiwis were caught by a flying Sam Bird. He had driven a canny race, sitting in the slipstream of Jean-Eric Vergne and da Costa for several laps, saving energy.

It paid off as he made a challenge on Cassidy’s second place in the final exchanges. The trio of Evans, Cassidy and Bird finished the race nose-to-tail in a thrilling finish.

Finishing seventh behind da Costa, Vergne and Vandoorne was points leader Pascal Wehrlein who surged through from a lowly 18th on the grid.

The McLaren pairing of Jake Hughes and Rene Rast took eight and ninth, while Sebastien Buemi took the final point.

This was despite a hand injury that he received in the early laps when he was in collision with a slowing Maserati driven by Maximilian Guenther.

Results

When: March 25 **Where:** Anhembi, Sao Paulo
Laps: 35
Race: 1 Mitch Evans (Jaguar TCS Racing) 53m25.536s; 2 Nick Cassidy (Envision Racing) +0.284s; 3 Sam Bird (Jaguar TCS Racing) +0.507s; 4 Antonio Felix da Costa (Porsche Formula E Team) +3.487s; 5 Jean-Eric Vergne (DS Penske) +4.042s; 6 Stoffel Vandoorne (DS Penske) +4.576s; 7 Pascal Wehrlein (Porsche Formula E Team) +5.659s; 8 Jake Hughes (McLaren) +6.141s; 9 Rene Rast (McLaren) +7.403s; 10 Sebastien Buemi (Envision Racing) +7.976s. **Pole:** Vandoorne. **Fastest lap:** Bird 1m13.684s (89.04mph). **Championship positions (after 6/16 rounds):** 1 Wehrlein 86; 2 Dennis 62; 3 Cassidy 61; 4 Vergne 60; 5 da Costa 58; 6 Bird 44.

HEDLEY AIMS FOR ARDEN GB3 DEAL

British Formula 4 frontrunner James Hedley is hopeful of securing a GB3 race deal with Arden VRD after a strong showing with the team in last week's pre-season test.

Hedley took four British F4 race wins in both 2020 and '21, and in the latter season was the early-season points leader. He graduated full-time to GB3 last year, with Elite then JHR, and was 17th in the table.

Hedley was third fastest at last week's GB3 media day driving with Arden, one of the few GB3 teams with a vacancy for 2023.

Hedley told Motorsport News: "Hopefully I'll get a deal done [with Arden] and our aim is to go and win the championship and just maximise the car every weekend and see what we can get. Definitely top three, that's got to be the aim. We need results this year, we had a learning year last year. Got to get the accolades to move on with my career at the end of the year.

"I was really happy with the car, felt really comfortable in it. Yesterday was my first day in the car and we were already P3 so a bit more time in it and we can only get quicker."

Hedley: looking for deal

SHOOTOUT WINNER GETS JHR DRIVE

ROKiT Racing Stars winner Deagen Fairclough has secured his place on the 2023 British Formula 4 grid with the JHR Developments team.

The 16-year-old Fiesta Junior racer earned his opportunity by winning the inaugural ROKiT Racing Stars multi-stage esports competition that concluded with a University of Bolton shootout last year. Fairclough can now make a single-seaters move that was previously prohibited by budget, and has already had test outings.

The esports scheme, seeking to remove cost barriers for talented youngsters, is spearheaded by former FIA Single Seater Commission president Bob Fernley and ROKiT.

Fairclough said: "I've got a lot to learn having never raced a car like this before, as I've come from a closed, front-wheel-drive Fiesta, so progression and consistency will be key."

Esports winner has race seat

Photos: Jakob Ebrey, Motorsport Images

"No-excuse" KMR car ready to race

THIRD GB4 CAR FOR CHAMPION KEVIN MILLS RACING

The reigning champion squad is seeking a driver for its new third car after the "good advert" of it dominating testing

By Graham Keilloh

Reigning GB4 teams' champion Kevin Mills Racing has a third car available for the first time for the slicks-and-wings championship and dominated pre-season testing with it last week.

Tom Mills – who finished fourth in the inaugural GB4 championship last year with KMR and is the son of team boss Kevin – in the new car topped the times in all four sessions of the championship's Donington Park media day last Thursday, with his best time 0.339 seconds clear of the rest.

Mills Jr is unlikely to be able to race the car in GB4 this season without more sponsorship, meaning Kevin is looking for a customer to race it, joining KMR's two confirmed 2023 GB4 drivers Jack Clifford and Jeremy Fairbairn.

Kevin told Motorsport News: "We've always wanted to move from two to three cars. It's happened a bit late, we got the car only last week. So I've probably missed the odd customer because we never had a car ready at the time.

"If we were able to get sponsorship for Tom then he would be able to race it but really as a business we need to run a third customer.

"We didn't probably expect to be the fastest [in all sessions], the car's new to us and teething problems you would expect. It's a good advert: it's a good car for somebody to come along and jump in, a no-excuse car then."

Kevin Mills: looking for customer

Romanek also supports charity

ROMANEK AIMS FOR TREBLE TOP

GB4 race-winner and Formula Ford pacesetter Lucas Romanek is looking to win three Formula Ford championships in 2023 after adding a Castle Combe campaign to his National and United attacks.

Romanek, 19, finished third in the National FF1600 standings last year, was runner-up in the inaugural United championship, plus took a race win in a one-off GB4 Silverstone meeting appearance. In all cases he raced with Oldfield Motorsport that he remains with this season.

Romanek told Motorsport News: "Combe has attracted us this year because we live very local in Swindon, so we thought it would be a really good opportunity to race local and entice new viewers from Swindon.

"We're also supporting a new charity, called Doing it for Dan. It gives opportunities to young children in Wiltshire and Swindon to pursue their sporting dreams. Dan was a young lad who lived in Purton just outside Swindon, and he was killed in a road traffic accident on his bike. He loved sports. We wanted to support it because it was something close to our heart.

"We've definitely knuckled down over the winter to try and get the most out of the car and the team, learn from what we made mistakes in last year, just really focus on all the championships and – I'll say it now – win all the championships."

DUCKHAMS COLOURS RETURN TO FORDS

Iconic Duckhams sponsorship is returning to fully back a Formula Ford competitor for the first time in over 20 years with star sim racing graduate Jacob Tofts.

Duckhams' blue-and-yellow colours featured on the Formula Ford cars of famous names such as Eddie Irvine, Mark Webber and Dan Wheldon. The brand last fully sponsored competitors in British Formula Ford in 2002.

Tofts is a multiple sim racing champion who will compete for real with Souley Motorsport in the United Formula Ford championship, starting with this weekend's Donington Park season opener. The 19-year-old is the son of category stalwart and multiple Festival Zetec winner Neil.

Tofts said: "One of my earliest childhood memories is of watching recordings of Formula Ford races with the blue-and-yellow Duckhams cars at the front.

"I'm hopeful that my [sim] experience will translate quickly to real-world racing. Since first testing at the end of last season, I've been able to make a lot of progress and my aim is to be at the front fighting for wins as soon as possible."

Irvine had the iconic livery

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RACING NEWS

Photos: Motorsport Images, Jakob Ebrey, Dan Bathie

IN BRIEF

Restart the car
Reigning TCR UK champions Restart Racing and Chris Smiley will pursue their title defence in 2023 as the first team in the world to compete with the brand-new Honda Civic Type R TCR. Restart's effort with Smiley took a stunning title last year and it will have the third-generation #1 Civic with a new livery at Snetterton's season opener next weekend.

Mutch ado
Paddock Motorsport returns to GT Cup this season with a single McLaren 570S GT4 for reigning Praga Cup UK champion Gordie Mutch alongside experienced Tim Docker. Mutch took the inaugural Praga crown driving alongside YouTube star Jimmy Broadbent and is now set for his first GT Cup campaign. Mutch and Docker are aiming for GT Cup's GTH championship for GT4-spec cars.

Jem joins
British rising star Jem Hepworth is set to make history as the first female competitor in the new McLaren Trophy for the all-new Artura Trophy car. Hepworth, who won 2020's Britcar Endurance championship in a Praga, joins a Greystone GT and RAFA Racing Club effort driving alongside RAFA founder Rafa Martinez in the GT World Challenge Europe-supporting Pro-Am contest.

Hand up
Junior Saloon Car champion Charlie Hand will race in 2023's British Endurance Championship in a RNR Performance Cars Ferrari 458 Challenge alongside Chris Goddard. Hand won the JSCC title in 2021, then competed in Britcar Trophy's Clio contest last year, winning several races. The Crawley teenager got his 2023 BEC campaign underway last weekend at Silverstone.

Lively Legends
Long-standing Legends competitor Mike Schlup has brokered a deal for the contest's new Elite Cup – for its three British Touring Car Championship meeting appearances – to get an exclusive fuel cleansing additive supplier and television coverage sponsor. Schlup's business is the UK distributor for JLM Lubricants, which gets the roles. Legends' entries for its main and Elite contests are nearing 30 with latest names confirmed including returning multiple race-winner Connor Mills.

GONZALEZ AND STANISLAUS SHARE PRAGA

Former IndyCar man returns to racing alongside BBC documentary star in Britcar Prototype Cup full-season entry

By Graham Keilloh

Ex-F1 tester Gonzalez returns with Praga after eight-year hiatus

Stanislaus (r) gets a full-season entry with experienced co-driver

Former IndyCar and GP2 driver Rodolfo Gonzalez is returning to racing after eight years away piloting a Praga R1 in the Britcar Prototype Cup alongside Ruben Stanislaus with Idola Motorsport.

Venezuelan Gonzalez raced in GP2 from 2009 to 2012 plus was a Formula 1 tester with Marussia, Force India and Caterham. He then in 2015 did six IndyCar races with Dale Coyne Racing.

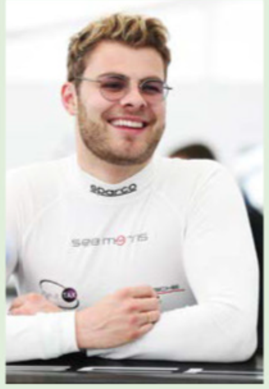
Gonzalez will share the R1 prototype with 18-year-old British-Grenadian Stanislaus, in a full-season entry in the Praga Cup that is part of Britcar's new prototype contest.

Stanislaus sampled the R1 late last year at Donington Park alongside Lewis Appiagyei in the then-standalone Praga Cup UK. Stanislaus and Appiagyei also co-starred in BBC documentary Born to Race, charting their progress in 2022.

The Idola team took Gordie Mutch and Jimmy Broadbent to the Praga Cup UK's inaugural championship victory last year.

Gonzalez said: "I am aware that coming back after such a long time will be a big challenge, but I believe in myself and I feel I have all the support I need from Idola Motorsport. I can't wait to hit the track."

Idola's second R1 in its two-car line-up for 2023 will be driven by the returning Chris Bridle alongside Praga debutant Will Stowell. Bridle, sharing an Idola-entered R1 with his twin brother Ed, finished third in Praga Cup UK last year and was awarded Amateur Driver of the Year.


Morris: back in action

CHAMPS MORRIS AND RAM UNITE

British GT champion Seb Morris returns to endurance action this weekend with reigning British GT double champion team RAM Racing in a GT Cup Mercedes GT4 alongside Charles Dawson.

Welshman Morris, who won 2017's British GT overall title in a Team Parker Bentley, joins Dawson for selected GT Cup rounds this season, starting with Donington Park's curtain raiser this weekend. The 27-year-old's initial schedule also includes Brands Hatch in late April, Silverstone in late July and Snetterton in early October.

This programme will be the first time Morris has raced a Mercedes, and he is also set to assist Dawson with a GT3 testing programme. Morris last year raced in three Porsche Carrera Cup GB meetings, again with Team Parker.

Morris said: "I can't wait to get started and to bring all of the experience I've gained from British GT, the GT World Challenge, International GT Challenge, 24H Series and the Rolex 24 at Daytona – among others! The GT4 car will be a little different to get used to from GT3, but I'm buzzing to be back on track."

Kyle-Henney (l), Wood (c) and Wilkinson will race Boxsters with the same team

FEMALE TRIO GET BOXSTER BOW

Three female racers will make history this weekend by racing in the Porsche Club GB Boxster Cup championship all in the same SW Engineering team.

Jess Wilkinson, Sarah Wood and Zoe Kyle-Henney all make their racing debuts on Saturday at Donington Park in newly built Porsche 986 Boxsters. It will be the first such female-dominated line-up in Porsche Club GB and Boxster Cup history, and all three are set for full seasons, though Wood misses one round. They are joined in the team's line-up by Paul Watson.

Kyle-Henney's older brother Matt won 2021's Porsche Club championship with marque-specialist SW Engineering, while team co-owner Stuart Wallace was number-one mechanic for Kyle-Henney's father, Carrera Cup GB racer Peter.

SW co-owner Ellie Bartley told Motorsport News: "It was a natural fruition: it wasn't like we put a post out there on social media or walked round the paddock going 'we want female drivers'. It was the customers [that] came to us.

"It's really nice and we hope that it will go beyond this season and they'll progress through the Porsche Club ranks and possibly further.

"To have a predominantly all-female team is unheard of [in Porsches]. And it's nice as well because one of the two championship coordinators is also a woman. So that women in motorsport card is really being played this year in a really positive way."

UK AND IRELAND-BOUND EUROPEAN RALLY TROPHY GETS REVAMP FOR 2023

International rallying's third-tier category begins with first round of 20 in Czech Republic – and Ulster and Ceredigion are in the line-up

Photos: Jakob Ebrey, mcklein-imagedatabase.com

Ulster Rally will be monitored by governing body officials

Rally Ceredigion will be an ERT round

By Graham Lister

The revitalised FIA European Rally Trophy kicks off in Czech Republic this weekend with three home-based events appearing on the 20-round schedule in 2023.

Positioned one step below the European Rally Championship, the ERT is adopting a new format this year by moving away from several regional-based competitions to one centralised contest as part of efforts to make the series easier to follow and more attractive to drivers and teams.

Drivers are free to contest as many events as their budgets allow but can count their best six scores only. The winner-takes-all ERT Trophy Final has been scrapped as a result.

National sporting authorities (ASNs) were invited to nominate up to two events, and while 14 have done so this season, the total number of rounds could rise or fall in subsequent years depending on levels of interest.

The format change will make the ERT reminiscent of the old ERC, which would typically feature 20-plus rounds per year prior to its streamlining for 2004.

While there will be no separate class titles based on car performance, a coefficient will be applied according to the number of starters in Rally2, Rally3, Rally4, Rally5 and RGT cars. In theory, this will give the possibility for any driver to win the title regardless of car type.

"The level of competitor interest in ERT wasn't consistent across all regions, there were difficulties organising FIA-standard events in some regions and the ERT Final didn't attract the numbers we hoped it would," said the FIA's regional rally chief Jerome Roussel. "With one calendar made up of a maximum of two events per country, plus a coefficient that will make it possible for any driver to win the title regardless of the car they drive, we have high hopes that the changes will deliver a strong ERT."

The asphalt-based Valasska Rally in southern Czech Republic counts as round one of the ERT from March 31-April 2 with the mainly gravel Lausitz Rallye in Germany hosting the season finale from November 9-11. Rounds also take place in Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Croatia, France, Poland, Portugal, Serbia, Slovenia and Switzerland.

FIA TO MONITOR HOME EVENTS FOR THE FUTURE

While the UK and Ireland remain absent from the European or World championship calendars, fans can look forward to three home events counting towards an FIA series this season.

Donegal International Rally (June 16-18), Ulster Rally (August 18-19) and Rali Ceredigion in Wales (September 1-3) are the three ERT events taking place in the UK or Ireland.

Because the ERT permits ASNs across Europe to nominate two rallies regardless of when they are scheduled, there are some clashes with Donegal and Ceredigion running on the same weekends as the Delta Rally in Croatia and Rally Bulgaria respectively.

But even if the clashes might impact on entries, all three home ERT rounds will be monitored for their suitability as future ERC or WRC hosts, according to the FIA's Jerome Roussel.

"We want the events to have the potential to be considered for the ERC or WRC in the future," he said.

INDOOR STAGE TO OPEN GRAN CANARIA EUROPEAN ROUND

Rally Islas Canarias will begin with a stage that features a section through an indoor basketball court.

The 1.66-mile test starts outside the Gran Canaria Arena – located close to the event service park – from 2105hrs local time on Thursday on May 4.

Once inside the stadium, which is home to the CB Gran Canaria professional basketball team, drivers will be required to perform a donut turn before they head back outside towards the finish.

The stage is the first of 13 on the itinerary for round two of the European Rally Championship, which covers 118 competitive miles and finishes on May 6.

MILNER SET FOR URUGUAY AFTER RALLY STAR VENUE SWITCH

Katie Milner's bid for a place on the FIA Rally Star Training season will take her to Uruguay – rather than Peru – next month following an FIA Rally Star Women's Final venue change.

The event had been due to take place in Peru last month but was postponed and a new location sought for safety reasons following political unrest in the country.

Last week, the Polideportivo Motor Maldonado off-road motorsport complex in Maldonado, east of the Uruguayan capital Montevideo, was confirmed as the host venue of the FIA Rally Star American Final from April 30-May 2 with the FIA Rally Star Women's Final scheduled at the same venue on May 3.

Along with Swede Maja Halle Fellenius, Milner qualified for the FIA Rally Star Women's Final for her performance in the FIA Rally Star European Final in Germany in January 2022.

If Milner wins the FIA Rally Star Women's Final a season in the FIA Rally Star Training Season driving a Ford Fiesta Rally3 will await after which the best four drivers at the end of the FIA Rally Star Training season will secure a Junior WRC Championship campaign in 2024.

Kalle Rovanpera (above and top right) has had a tough start to 2023

ROVANPERA'S WINLESS RUN NO CONCERN FOR TOYOTA CHIEFS

Kalle Rovanpera is in danger of equalling Ott Tanak's recent record for the longest amount of time taken to win the first event during a title-defending season.

Tanak took until the fourth round of the Covid-19-truncated 2020 World championship season to land his first win of the campaign, having lifted the WRC crown the previous year.

Prior to that, the longest wait was in 2011 when Sebastien Leob – the 2010 champion – took until second round to celebrate a rally win.

Despite going three events without a victory in 2023, there are no concerns among Rovanpera's team bosses after Rally Mexico delivered more frustration for the Finn.

"For Kalle and Jonne [Halttunen, co-driver], it seems like the events continue to be trials for our defending champions, but I'm sure they will continue to enjoy rallying without rushing," said Akio Toyoda, chairman of the factory Toyota team.

After Rovanpera finished fourth in Mexico, Toyota team boss Jari-Matti Latvala added: "Kalle did a good job, thinking about the championship and the points."

Of his challenging Mexico weekend, 22-year-old Rovanpera said: "It's not been easy for us.

"We lost out on Friday when we were kind of opening the road and then we were a bit behind in the fight for the rest of the weekend.

"To finish fourth overall from our starting position gives us some decent points."

Rovanpera will aim to end his winless run on Croatia Rally from April 20-23, an event he won in 2022.

Photos: Jakob Ebrey, Ben Lawrence, William Neill

CRONIN SAYS 'ONE RALLY AT A TIME' IN BRITISH TITLE BID

Irish battler uncertain on plans for the remainder of 2023 beyond the Jim Clark showdown in May

By Paul Lawrence

British Rally Championship contender Keith Cronin says he will be taking one rally at a time as he bids to match Jimmy McRae's record of five championship victories.

Cronin and co-driver Mikie Galvin were late entries for the opening BRC round, the Malcolm Wilson Rally, in their Tom Gahan Motorsport VW Polo GTi R5 and finished the day second to rally winner Adrien Fourmaux.

The 36-year old from West Cork admitted that his entry on the first BRC round was in doubt until close to the rally. "It's all been a bit last-minute really, up to a few days ago I wasn't sure if I'd be doing the rally," Cronin said at the Cumbria event. "Those of us who aren't professional competitors have commitments and responsibilities outside of rallying, these have to be looked after as well. It's been fairly hectic work-wise in recent months."

He said that a bid to match McRae's record is still not completely confirmed. "We're taking it rally by rally. It's difficult to find finances and obviously they've included Ypres in the BRC this year which isn't cheap to do. The Malcolm Wilson was a good result for us after six months away," he added.

Cronin is hopeful of contesting the second BRC round, the Jim Clark Rally at the end of May, but there remains a question mark over his plans beyond the closed-road rally in the Scottish borders.

His four BRC titles to date, taken in 2009, '10, '12 and '17 leave Cronin level with Roger Clark on four BRC crowns.

Cronin will follow up Malcolm Wilson outing with the Jim Clark Rally in May

GREER COMMITS TO CHASING THIRD NI RALLY CROWN

Jonathan Greer says that he will continue with the defence of his Northern Ireland Rally Championship title after cruising to victory in the second round at Bishopscourt.

Greer and Niall Burns won the latest rally to continue a perfect start to their 2023 campaign in the Citroen C3 Rally2.

Prior to the season, 34-year-old Greer said that results from the first two rallies would determine whether or not he would aim for a third-consecutive Northern Ireland Rally crown.

Now that he has committed to it, he could become only the fourth person in the series' history to achieve the feat and follow in the footsteps of Derek McGarrity (2012-2016), Kevin Lynch (2004-2006) and Mervyn Hill (1990-1992).

"Yes, we are now going to continue," said Greer. "We've managed to bank two perfect scores from Kirkistown and Bishopscourt so the plan is to try and keep the momentum going.

"The C3 is definitely working better now. The guys back at DGM have worked incredibly hard behind the scenes to get the car to where I like it," he added.

"I definitely feel the car is getting better all the time and that's giving me confidence but I still reckon I need more seat time, especially on closed roads."

Jonathan Greer has his sights set on the NI crown

GRIFFTHS AND MORRISON CLAIM CIRCUIT RALLY CROWN

Griffiths has now claimed the Circuit Rally Championship

The Motorsport News-supported Circuit Rally Championship reaches its penultimate event at Cadwell Park this Sunday, with John Griffiths and Emma Morrison confirmed as champions.

After six rounds, Griffiths and Morrison cannot be caught in their Ford Fiesta R5 after an exemplary season with three wins and two second places to date. Even a non-finish last time out at Donington Park, after transmission dramas, failed to keep them from the 2022-23 title.

Though the title is now secure with two events still to run, Griffiths will not be backing off and can expect a tough challenge as the series returns for a second event at Cadwell Park.

In R5 and Rally2 machinery are notable rivals Michael Igoe, who has taken maximum points in the last two rounds, Ollie O'Donovan, Roger Duckworth and Paul Murro who returns to the series after missing three events.

The Alan Healy Memorial Rally will run with a field of around 70 cars at the three-dimensional Lincolnshire circuit and the season will then conclude two weeks later with the SMC Stages back at Anglesey on Sunday, April 16.

Griffiths is unlikely to contest the concluding Anglesey event as he is planning to tackle his first closed-road event, Rally Tendring and Clacton, a week later.

JUNIOR BIRCH PLANS GRADUATION IN 2024

Jack Birch hopes to use his final season in the Junior 1000 Championship as a springboard into the BTRDA Rally Series in 2024.

Birch, who will turn 17 in November, finished second in the J1000 opener at Anglesey recently and will now continue his battle with Oliver Waggett in round two of nine at Caerwent on Sunday.

Birch told MN: "This is my third year in Juniors and I've loved every minute of it. My grandad Neil has been rallying since the 1970s so it was in the family. I've been going watching rallies ever since I could walk."

Based in Burscough in Lancashire, Birch already has plans for his next step. "We're looking to go into BTRDA and do the gravel championship with a 1400 engine in the same Nissan Micra. That would be a big step up and then see if we can climb the ladder," said Birch who is now in his GCSE year at school.

Birch is a Junior challenger

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BLACK READY FOR ASPHALT CHALLENGE AFTER 10-YEAR GAP

Rally2 machine tweaks to take on Protyre assault on Manx National showdown

Photos: Jakob Ebrey, Paul and Ben Lawrence

By Paul Lawrence

Callum Black will give his Ford Fiesta Rally2 its Protyre Motorsport UK Asphalt Rally Championship debut on the Manx National Rally May 12-13 in what will be his first asphalt rally for 10 years.

Black got the new car from M-Sport last summer and to date it's only done half a dozen gravel rallies. Following the recent Malcolm Wilson Rally it is now being converted to asphalt specification. Black will be co-driven by Jack Morton for his return to a sealed surface event.

Black said: "Doing the Protyre Asphalt Championship was part of the reason why we bought the Fiesta Rally2, because I want to do more asphalt events. We'd like to do all the Protyre Asphalt rounds and dovetail them with the BRC, especially if we've registered some good early results. With the Isle of Man being a double header, the aim is to have three good scores on the board by the end of the Jim Clark."

His last all-asphalt rally was in 2013 and he hopes to test the Fiesta Rally2 before heading to the Isle of Man. "Our last full asphalt rally was 10 years ago, but we did the Somerset Stages and we were fastest both times over the Porlock toll road asphalt stage," added Black. "Hopefully the pace is still there on asphalt – but who knows after such a long time?"

Black will try Asphalt series

White: win on round one

WHITE SETS HIS TARGET ON JBRC TITLE

Northern Ireland's Kyle White has said he is under no illusion about just how difficult it is going to be to get his hands on the Junior British Rally Championship title despite winning the opening round.

White and co-driver Sean Topping won the Junior category on the Malcolm Wilson Rally.

It was the second Junior victory of their careers despite a puncture on the opening stage and later breaking a shock absorber on their Peugeot 208 Rally4.

White said: "It's a great way to start, especially as we're coming off the back of a disappointing 2022 campaign, and although we won our first event last season, I really don't want it to stop there.

"Although it is a great feeling to have won the Junior division of the Malcom Wilson Rally it's a bit too early to be thinking about the lead of the championship. Having led the series for the first half of 2021 before falling away, I know first-hand just how difficult it is to stay out front, so we will do everything to maximise our chances going forward into the next round in Scotland."

With the latest Rally4 version of the Peugeot, 26-year-old White reckons he is in the best place to fight for top honours. "The Rally 4 car was a huge step-up last year and we all feel this year the car will be even better," he explained.

GIBSON GOES FROM TRUCKS TO A RALLY CAR

Former British Truck Racing winner and Fun Cup racer Martin Gibson made his rallying debut on the Dukeries Rally at Donington Park.

Gibson's co-driver at Donington was his Fun Cup team-mate Ellis Hadley, also making his rallying debut and they finished 11th in class.

"I'm building my own three-litre BMW but we borrowed a Mini Cooper from George Clarke for the Dukeries," said Gibson. "It's a bit of a shakedown as we are planning to do the first Mini Challenge round in the car at Anglesey too."

CHANEY-NORTH STARS AT WESTON PARK

Steve Chaney-North was denied a top five finish on the recent AGBO Stages on only his seventh-ever stage rally.

Chaney-North has built his 2.5-litre Vauxhall-engined Ford Escort Mk2 into one of the most immaculate and beautifully presented Escorts in asphalt rallying, yet he has only done the AGBO event at Weston Park three times in the last seven years.

This year's event, when he was running fourth for much of the day before going out by alternator failure, was his first rally since the corresponding event in 2022.

He had planned to do the Neil Howard Stages at Oulton Park last November, but the engine blew up the week before the rally. Though he has no immediate plans for other events, Chaney-North hopes to be back out before too long.

His co-driver on the AGBO Stages was once more John Pickavance, normally seen sitting beside historic contender Barry Stephenson-Wheeler who is a close friend of Chaney-North and was part of his service crew at Weston Park.

www.intrinsicworks.co.uk
JRK 55V
Chaney-North blew away the cobwebs at Weston Park

ROAD RALLY ROUND-UP

HUGHES JONES GOES BACK TO WINNING FORM

After a one-second defeat on the Rali Bro Caron, Arwel Hughes Jones returned to his winning ways when he and navigator Dafydd-Sion Lloyd took victory on the Rali Llyn.

It wasn't a straightforward run to success as the pair lost a minute in the first half as they picked up a puncture on the tightest section of the half. This meant that they were only in fifth place at petrol.

Kevin Kerr and Huw Manion, looking for their third win on the Llyn, held a 34s lead at the halt, but then lost 40s with a mix up getting a card signed at a PC. The winners cleaned the section and squeezed through to take the win by six seconds over Kerr/Manion.

A storming drive in the second half allowed Carwyn Evans/Dylan John Williams to move from sixth at petrol to third at the finish, although they were almost two minutes behind Hughes Jones/Lloyd.

On the Taunton Rally, running for the first time in 16 years, Phil Harris/Shaun Layland took a dominant win. Philip Luxton/Oliver Luxton held a narrow lead initially, but then lost time with a puncture. Despite matching the winners' pace for the rest of the event, they couldn't make up the deficit.

Ian Mills

Results

Merfyn Hughes Memorial Rali Llyn
Organiser: Harlech & District Motor Club **When:** March 18-19 **Where:** North West Wales **Championships:** WAMC & ANWCC **Route:** 127 miles **Starters:** 90.
1 Arwel Hughes Jones/Dafydd-Sion Lloyd (Ford Escort) 6m08s; 2 Kevin Kerr/Huw Manion (Ford Escort) +6s; 3 Carwyn Evans/ Dylan John Williams (Ford Escort); 4 Ieuan Evans/Dafydd Evans (Ford Escort); 5 Andrew Jones/Steven Roberts (Ford Escort); 6 George Williams/Cadog Davies (Ford Escort); 7 Iwan Jones/Andrew Lowe (Ford Escort); 8 Dewi Williams/Daniel Jones (Peugeot 206); 9 Richard Jerman/Alan James (Ford Escort); 10 Mark Lennox/Ian Beamond (Ford Escort). **Class winners:** Dafydd Alun Davies/Bryn Jones (Peugeot 205); Rhys Jones/Llyr Lewis (Subaru Impreza); Iwan Bowness/Tomos Shakespeare (Toyota Corolla).

Taunton Road Rally
Organiser: Taunton Motor Club **When**: March 18-19 **Where**: Somerset/Devon **Championships:** ASWMC **Route**: 175 miles **Starters**: 30.
1 Phil Harris/Shaun Layland (Suzuki Swift) 8m42s; 2 Philip Luxton/Oliver Luxton (Rover 25) +5m21s; 3 Luke Quinnell/Kayleigh Dingle (MG ZR); 4 James Appleby/Andy Ballantyne (Ford Fiesta ST150); 5 Paul Howard/Andrew Axford (Subaru Impreza); 6 Paul Watts/Sam Treleaven (MG ZR); 7 Will Jefferis/Tom Jefferis (VW Golf); 8 Adrian Beer/Adam Beer (MG ZR); 9 Anton Shaw/Alf Chanter (BMW 318); 10 Ashley Rice/Trevor Disney (Mini Cooper). **Class winners:** Jefferis/Jefferis; Howard/Axford.

MEMORIAL GARDEN STAGES RALLY: CONDOR MOTOR SPORTS CLUB BY ALASDAIR BECK MARCH 25

INGLIS AND SAYER-PAYNE TAKE LOTUS TO RALLY VICTORY AFTER TOPPING ARBROATH SHOWDOWN

Greg Inglis and Charley Sayer-Payne took victory on the Memorial Garden Stages Rally by 44 seconds at the end of the six-stage event.

A very smooth and controlled drive in their Lotus Exige paid off. After over a year of constant reliability issues with the car Inglis was delighted, and only using one set of tyres all day was the icing on the cake.

John Easson Award winner Johnnie Mackay and co-driver Michael Cruickshank were out to test Mackay's Mitsubishi Lancer E7 after it let him down on the recent Snowman Rally. Trying out different diff settings, Mackay was too flamboyant with the handbrake on the morning stages but was tidier in the afternoon to take second.

After stalling three times on the opening stage, Robbie Pearson and Tom Hynd's two fastest times on the final two stages took them to the third step on the podium by just eight seconds from Des Campbell and Cameron Dunn (Peugeot 206).

In the Ecosse Junior 1000s it was first blood to Oliver Phillips and Barry Young in their new Skoda Citigo.

Results

Organiser: Condor MSC **When:** March 25 **Where:** RM Condor, Arbroath **Championships:** Back to Roots Tarmack Championship, Junior 1000 Ecosse Challenge, Scottish Tarmack Rally Championship **Stages:** 6 **Starters:** 45
1 Greg Inglis/Charley Sayer-Payne (Lotus Exige) 55m55s; 2 Johnnie Mackay/Michael Cruickshank (Mitsubishi Lancer E7) +44s; 3 Robbie Pearson/Tom Hynd (Mitsubishi Lancer E9); 4 Des Campbell/Cameron Dunn (Peugeot 206); 5 Ben MacDowall/Alison Horne (BMW 130i); 6 Keith Richardson/Jackie Richardson (Ford Escort Cosworth); 7 William Pollock/John Marshall (Ford Escort Mk2); 8 Andy Scott/Kirsty Mochrie (Ford Escort Mk2); 9 John O'Kane/Meghan O'Kane (Subaru Impreza); 10 Graeme Rintoul/Jim Rintoul (Ford Fiesta). **Class winners:** Christopher Smith/Amy McCubbin (Vauxhall Corsa); Campbell/Dunn; Rintoul/Rintoul; Mackay/Cruickshank; Oliver Phillips/Barry Young (Skoda Citigo).

BRISCA F2 ROUND-UP

Bate tops the pack at Hednesford

Bate escaped the F2 pack

The BriSCA Formula 2 World Championship qualifying trail moved to the wide-open Tarmac of Hednesford Hills where Ben Bate took the honours.

With the 41-car entry run all-in, the almost inevitable early pile-up in the main event claimed a number of fancied runners while allowing those who avoided trouble to make up significant ground. Gordon Moodie was among the beneficiaries and, after finding a way past Jack Cave, picked off Ryan Sheahan and Aidy Whitehead to move into second. Moodie set about chasing Bate, who had built a big lead, but was unable to catch him.

James Rygor scorched to a hat-trick of two heat wins and the meeting final at St Day in Cornwall, taking a commanding victory in the main event ahead of Dale Moon and Jon Palmer who traded second in the closing laps. Julian Coombes led much of the early stages, either side of a heavy accident in which Richard Andrews had to be cut from his car, before slipping to seventh.

Jordon Thackra took the honours in an action-packed event amid tricky conditions on the shale at Bradford's Odsal Stadium, while Ryan McGill continued his fine start to the season with another win at Cowdenbeath.

Mark Paulson

Results

Organiser: Yorstox **When:** March 25 **Where:** Odsal Stadium, Bradford **Starters:** 36
1 Jordon Thackra; 2 Dave Polley; 3 Jack Witts; 4 Billy Webster; 5 Harley Thackra; 6 Ben Lockwood; 7 Nathan Topliff; 8 Jack Cave; 9 Jordan Meacham; 10 Simon Mawdsley.

Organiser: GMP Scotland **When:** March 25 **Where:** The Racewall, Cowdenbeath **Starters:** 11.
1 Ryan McGill; 2 Tom Bennett; 3 John Hogg; 4 Steve Smith; 5 Peter Watt; no other finishers.

Organiser: Incarace/Spedeworth **When:** March 26 **Where:** Hednesford Hills **Starters:** 41.
1 Ben Bate; 2 Gordon Moodie; 3 Ryan Sheahan; 4 Jack Cave; 5 Aidy Whitehead; 6 Matt Stoneman; 7 Jason Ward; 8 Dave Polley; 9 Harley Thackra; 10 Jack Witts.

Organiser: Autospeed **When:** March 26 **Where:** United Downs Raceway, St Day **Starters:** 21.
1 James Rygor; 2 Dale Moon; 3 Jon Palmer; 4 Paul Rice; 5 Charlie Lobb; 6 Leah Sealy; 7 Julian Coombes; 8 Paul Moss; 9 Joe Marquand; 10 Matt Linfield.

HOT ROD FIELD WIPED OUT BY HUGE MULTI-CAR SHUNT AT HEDNESFORD

Spilt oil causes mayhem at Cannock raceway for short oval tin-top stars

Photos: Red Bull Content Pool, Ant Jenkins, mkpics.net, Colin Casserley, Paul Lawrence

By David Addison

Chaos afflicted National Hot Rods

A major nine-car crash threatened to decimate the National Hot Rod heat entry at Hednesford on Sunday and only outstanding work by the teams returned all but two of the cars to the track later in the day.

The accident happened early in the opening heat when Ashley Shaw's Vauxhall Tigra lost its front bumper, attached to which was the oil cooler. With that severed, oil was sprayed on to the track and Shaw tangled with Superstox champion Nick Roots who spun into the Turn 3 wall. In turn, Shaw and Roots (Vauxhall Tigra) were joined by a wave of cars who hit the oil: Carl Waller-Barrett, Chris Haird, Dick Hillard and Jordan Morgan (all Vauxhall Tigras), Ivan Grayson (Ford Fiesta), Brian Twinn and Jack Blood were all involved. Twinn's Peugeot 206 was the worst damaged.

"There's not a straight panel on it," said Twinn who was set to miss the next two events as he will be in Thailand for his 50th birthday. Waller-Barrett went on to win heat two; Haird, who believed his car was beyond repair, managed to get it out for heat two, and Blood's Vauxhall Tigra that had suffered huge front damage was returned for the final. "I didn't have time to scrub off any speed," said a sore Blood.

The teams have just under two weeks before the next World qualifying round at Skegness on Good Friday.

WORLD RX TO HEAD TO HONG KONG IN 2023

WRX will go to the Far East

The final round of the World Rallycross Championship will take place in the city of Hong Kong this November.

The double-header weekend to conclude the 2023 season, with a new circuit created in Hong Kong's Central Harbourfront Event Space, next to the iconic Victoria Harbour. The event will follow World RX's return to South Africa for its penultimate weekend, the series moving outside Europe for the first time since 2019, with recent seasons constrained by the Coronavirus pandemic and then delay in the new electric cars being prepared.

"We are pleased to see international motorsport return to Hong Kong," said Hong Kong Automobile Association president Dr. Ringo Lee Yiu Pui. "With over 100 years of history, the HKAA is experienced in organising major events, and we are proud that Hong Kong will become the first venue in the Asia-Pacific region to welcome the FIA World Rallycross Championship, bringing the ultimate in motorsport entertainment to our city."

TIN TOPS GET HILLCLIMB RUNOFF

The fastest saloon and sports cars in hillclimbing will have their own top-10 runoffs alongside three events in the British Hillclimb Championship this season.

Building on the success of a couple of trial events last season, the 'BHC Tin-Top Top 10' will be held at Harewood (July 1-2), Shelsley Walsh (August 12-13) and Loton Park (September 23-24).

The 10 fastest eligible competitors from each of the timed class runs will qualify for the runoff, giving six runoffs in total. Points will be scored in each runoff on the basis of 10 for the fastest time down to one point for the 10th and slowest time.

Among the cars expected to set the pace will be the monstrous 850bhp+ Subaru Legacy of Damien Bradley, but there are many quick covered cars that could compete. Eligible cars are those based on production models. BHC Championship co-ordinator Tim Wilson said: "Spectators will see some of the fastest saloon and sportscars battling for points at three iconic venues. I'm sure that it will be a great spectacle and will hopefully develop into something bigger in future years."

Bradley will join the runoff

VITOLS TO TACKLE 5 NATIONS OUTINGS IN 2023

Former British Rallycross Championship 5 Nations Trophy event-winner Roberts Vitols will return to the series this year for selected appearances in a Citroen C4.

Vitols has signed to drive for newly named squad Team Duo on the opening weekend of the series at Lydden Hill on Easter Weekend, and the 5 Nations BRX round that will support the UK's round of the World Rallycross Championship at the same venue in July.

The Latvian won three times in his maiden Supercar campaign in 2021 driving the Pat Doran-owned car, but sat out last season, racing only in his home round of World RX in the RX2e electric series.

"I haven't driven a Supercar car since 2021, and I won't have a chance to test before the first practice session at Lydden Hill, but I race only to win – nothing else interests me so the same goal is every time I step in a race car, no matter in what competition," said the 20-year-old. "I have been training hard this off season and feel in very good physical and mental shape, this same approach allowed me to win already on my Supercar debut at Lydden Hill. The competition will be hard, but I want and love the challenge and looking forward to doing my best."

BRISCA F1: ODSAL, BRADFORD BY COLIN CASSERLEY MARCH 25

FINNIKIN TAKES UP THE RUNNING AS LEADER HARRIS GOES FLAT

BriSCA F1 raced for the Dave Berresford Memorial trophy at Bradford on Saturday night and Craig Finnikin was the form man, claiming the silverware ahead of Mat Newson.

Berresford was a mainstay in BriSCA F1 and raced from 1971 to 2011 during which he won 49 finals. He passed away in December 2022 and his wife Eileen donated some of Berresford's trophies for the event.

Callum Gill took up the early running while further back Lee Fairhurst, Finnikin and Tom Harris were slicing through the field. Just before the halfway point, Fairhurst got tangled with a backmarker and, simultaneously, Harris barged his way past Finnikin.

Harris assumed the lead when Gill was forced to retire at half distance with a flat rear tyre. Harris built up a substantial lead before he also retired with a rear flat. Finnikin was now in the top spot and, as the laps wound down, Newson closed in on the leader but was unable to get close enough to attempt an assault for the lead. Jack France moved into third in the closing stages.

"It was a case of survival in the first part of the race. When Harris took the lead I started to push a bit more; he was unlucky to get a flat," said Finnikin. "But I am proud to win this trophy, Berresford and my dad [Bert Finnikin], raced against each other a lot, so this means a lot to me."

Newson who claimed his second consecutive podium place said: "I was really trying to catch Finnikin, there wasn't a lot between our cars. It got a bit of a stalemate, but with four to go I closed in, I think he saw me coming and gave it a bit more. Backmarkers didn't help me, but I am happy with second."

Results

Organizser: YorStox, BriSCA F1 **Where:** Odsal Stadium, Bradford **When:** March 25 **Starters:** 32 1 Craig Finnikin; 2 Mat Newson; 3 Jack France; 4 Danny Wainman; 5 Mark Woodhull; 6 Hannah Andrew; 7 James Morris; 8 Lee Fairhurst; 9 Tommy Andrew; no other finishers.

Finnikin headed the F1 runners at Bradford

HISTORICS

DOWN THE WORKSHOP

AUSTIN HEALEY 3000

URX 727
Offered at auction

The rare rallying superstar

It is a very famous car
The most famous Austin Healey 3000 rally car of all time will be offered for auction by Bonhams at the Goodwood Members' Meeting on April 16. The ex-works car registered URX 727 was notably driven by Pat Moss and Ann Wisdom to victory in the 1960 Liege-Rome-Liege Rally and is an iconic car from a fantastic era of rallying.

It could reach £450,000
The Mk1 Austin Healey 3000 will go to auction with an estimated sale price of £350,000 to £450,000. Having been made famous by Pat Moss, the sister of Stirling, the victory on the Liege-Rome stands out as one of the rallying performances of a generation.

Liege-Rome was a tough rally
The Liege event was notorious for being one of the toughest rallies in Europe and the 1960 edition was no different. The non-stop, 96-hour hour route covered 2200 miles across Germany, Austria, Italy and Yugoslavia after starting in Belgium and getting as far as Rome before returning to the finish at Liege.

They made history
Moss and Wisdom made history by being the first female crew to win this daunting event, as well as being the first British crew driving a British car to win. They were one of only 13 cars to finish and had to deal with a damaged gearbox that was changed mid-rally and Moss's tiredness from driving for almost 90 hours non-stop. Works Healeys also finished second and third, ensuring the coveted team prize for Austin Healey.

Moss later owned the car
URX was brand new mid-season in 1960 and they took it to eighth overall on the Tulip Rally and second on the Alpine Rally as well as the Liege-Rome victory. Moss bought the Healey for just £500 in 1961 before selling it on and was later reunited with it during 2007 when she and Wisdom autographed the roof.

It has a long history
Notably, Peter Butt owned it for 30 years and contested many events in it. With a continuous history and now meticulously restored, this most famous of Austin Healey 3000s is a glorious memory from a time when European rallies were incredibly tough and driver stamina was just as important a part of the result as the car holding together.

CONTINUATION BENTLEY READY FOR RACE DEBUT AT DONINGTON PARK

Late-April bow for recreated machine before Le Mans Classic outing

By Paul Lawrence

Photos: Paul Lawrence

The new Bentley is on now track

The first continuation car from Bentley's pre-war racing history will race in the Mad Jack Trophy during the Donington Historic Festival on April 29-30.

A total of 12 continuation cars are being built to replicate Team Car Number 2 that competed at Le Mans 93 years ago and the first car will tackle a three-race season including the Le Mans Classic in July and Spa Six Hour meeting in late September.

The Bentley Blower continuation series, which is the first run of continuation cars based on a pre-war original, have been built by hand using a combination of laser-scanned data and original drawings. The base data was taken from the 1929 four-and-a-half-litre Team Car Number 2, arguably the most famous Bentley in the world and part of the Bentley Heritage Collection.

When the car goes to the Le Mans Classic it will be the first works Bentley to race at the French track since the Speed 8 victory in 2003. It will be joined by several customer cars as well as original 1920s team cars.

The race car, known as car zero, holds an FIA Historic Technical Passport and has been tested at Goodwood by experienced Bentley racer Stewart Morley and covered 380 miles. Drivers for the three races will be a mix of experienced racing journalists and professional race drivers.

Paul Williams from Bentley said: "We've already proved the quality of the engineering by completing a tough test at Goodwood and it's now time for the car to be unleashed for racing."

FAMOUS WORKS COBRA GOES BACK TO LE MANS

The ex-works AC Cobra that raced at Le Mans in 1963 will return to the French track this year with new owner Richard Wilson.

Raced 60 years ago by Ed Hugus and Peter Jopp, 645 CGT will now go back for the Le Mans Classic in July when Wilson will share the car with its preparer Gary Pearson.

Wilson bought the car from previous owner Carlos Monteverde and has recently started testing it.

"I'm taking it back to Le Mans," said Wilson. "It's a nice time to take it there as it is 100 years of Le Mans and 60 years since this car first raced there. We'll do four or five other races and maybe the Goodwood Revival as there's a Carroll Shelby celebration."

As well as the Cobra, Wilson also has a rare Maserati 250S sportscar and a Brabham BT6 Formula Junior.

The 1963 machine will be on familiar ground in France...

MN-BACKED HRCR ACTION RESUMES IN YORKSHIRE

Leigh Powley will be a favourite

The Motorsport News Historic Rally Car Register Clubmans Rally Championship continues with round two this Sunday, the North Yorkshire Classic Rally.

The 13th running of the York Motor Club event will be based near Easingwold and takes in a mix of regularity sections and special tests in the Howardian Hills and Vale of Pickering.

A capacity 65-car entry will be headed by the Toyota Corolla of Leigh Powley and Brian Goff who face a host of challengers including Jason and Daniel Stone in their Ford Escort Mk2 and the Mazda MX-5 of Dan and Nick Darkin.

A further 20 crews will contest a concurrent Classic Targa Rally, headed by veteran co-driver Peter Scott who will drive a Toyota MR2.

HISTORIC RACER JACKSON ADDS A TOUCH OF ELAN

Regular historic racer Simon Jackson has added a Lotus Elan to his fleet alongside his Lenham sports-racer and Historic F3 Chevron B43.

Jackson, who often races alongside his sons Cameron and Dominik, ran the ex-Mel Taylor Elan for the first time in the Masters test day at Donington recently.

"We will do some Masters events and we're looking at the Autosport Three Hour at Snetterton," he said. "The Elan is the main focus for this year."

Jackson is likely to share the car with either or both of his sons during the season and has an ambition for all three to contest the Spa Six Hours together in September.

The Lotus Elan has been added to Jackson's line-up

IN BRIEF

RIP Susie Moss
The whole of motorsport was saddened to learn of the death of Lady Susie Moss, widow of Sir Stirling Moss, at the age of 69. From their marriage in 1980, she was always alongside Sir Stirling, organising his busy schedule and greeting everyone with her customary warm smile. She nursed Sir Stirling in the years until his death in April 2020 but had rarely been seen in public since then.

RIP Robin Cunningham
MN was sad to learn of the recent death of Robin Cunningham who co-drove his brother-in-law Jimmy Fleming to victory in the 1983 Scottish Rally Championship in a Toyota Celica. Cunningham was a leading Scottish driver of the era and worked as manager of the Fleming Toyota Garage in Ayr. MN sends condolences to his family and friends in rallying.

Hawke-eyed
Historic Formula Ford 2000 racer Andrew Lancaster finally gave his rare Hawke DL16 a successful shakedown test at Mallory Park recently. Lancaster has been working on the car in his spare time for several years with considerable help from his father Alan. Previously they have both raced a later Pilbeam FF2000 but Andrew hopes to give the Hawke its racing return at Snetterton in late April.

New Spa format
The organisers of the Spa Six Hours have announced a revised format for this year's race, which marks the 30th anniversary of Europe's leading endurance race for classic cars. The event will start on Wednesday, September 27 with testing, followed by qualifying on Thursday and racing through Friday and Saturday. The Six Hour will start at 1600hrs on Saturday while Sunday will be taken up by classic car parades and gatherings.

Three-Hour filling
The entry list for the Autosport Three Hours is now two-thirds full with three weeks still to go until entries close for the pre '66 GT race. The HSCC has now taken 24 entries for the 18th running of a famous race that dates back to the late 1950s. In period, Jim Clark (twice) and Jack Sears were winners of the Autosport Three Hours. Up to 10 of the entries are from family pairings.

Three Legs
Dan Willan and Mark Appleton took their Volvo PV544 to victory on a challenging Three Legs of Mann when HERO-ERA returned to the Isle of Man recently. On a tough event, that included special tests on closed public roads, Willan Appleton out-distanced Paul Dyas and Martyn Taylor (Volvo Amazon) to win by more than a minute and a half. The event celebrated the 60th anniversary of the first Manx Trophy Rally in 1963.

MN REVEALS THE DETAILED ROUTE FOR THE 'RALLY OF THE YEAR'

We get the first look at the complete route for the five-day November epic. Paul Lawrence explains

Photos: Paul and Ben Lawrence

Crews will tackle longest event yet

It is what many people refer to as the 'rally of the year'. The 2023 Roger Albert Clark rally, which will take place on November 23-27, will be the biggest and best yet, with five full days of forest rallying covering Wales, Scotland and England.

The 180-car entry is already full with reserves and hotels around Carlisle have been fully booked for weeks. Motorsport News is delighted to have been granted first access to the full route for this year's rally, which opens with a ceremonial start in Carmarthen on Wednesday evening and finishes in Carlisle on Monday afternoon after 350 stage miles, 33 special stages and an unforgettable rallying experience.

Rally manager Colin Heppenstall is your guide for an exclusive run through what lays in wait for the competitors, marshals and fans who all come together to make this rally such a special event in the UK motorsport calendar. It will be the longest special stage rally in the UK for more than 30 years.

Heppenstall tells MN: "We start with the last stage of the 2021 event, which was probably the best received of the whole event. So we're starting with a 10.7-mile Crychan stage. Walters Arena is going to be the service area for the day and there is an eight-mile stage within the arena."

Thursday adds up to a very steady 47 stage miles for the first day, a BTRDA rally for starters, with an 0800hrs start and first car back at the finish before 1600hrs. "The first day is a relatively easy lead in for everybody, especially the new crews and the foreign crews. The idea is to get people to the end of the event and Thursday will just ease them in. We don't want to lose people on the first day if we can possibly avoid it," says Heppenstall.

Friday opens with another stage in the Crychan complex, featuring a new start location and the majority of the stage is fresh apart from the last mile and a half. "Then we move into some classics and a new area for the event. They are in absolutely superb condition."

With 77 miles, including 12 miles in Myherin and 16 miles in the main Hafren stage, this is where the results will start to open up. The first car is due to finish in Newtown by 1730hrs for the transport section up to Carlisle on Friday evening ahead of Saturday's new look leg in south-west Scotland.

"We start Saturday morning straight into the Ae stage that everyone knows well and this forest was badly hit by Storm Arwen," explains Heppenstall. "The vast majority of the trees have now been removed and the roads are in really good condition. The Ae and Dalbeattie stages are both single use.

"Then we move on to brand-new stages for this event, and some of them haven't been used for a long time. When I went to do the first check, all the Saturday stages were in snow apart from Dalbeattie because it is significantly lower but some of the views within the forest are absolutely stunning.

"Glen Gap is a very quick stage. It is closed in for the first couple of miles and then it opens up with fast, sweeping bends. Then it finishes off closed in again, but it's very fast in the middle. The two stages in Glentrool Forest are high up and if there is any snow, that's where it will be. These stages haven't been used since the old Merrick Stages rally, which was about 10 years ago, and it's probably the fastest forest on the entire rally.

"It's our first time going into the Galloway forests. We've worked with the local forester who has welcomed us with open arms and allowed us to have forests that haven't been used for quite some time. It's really good to have a forester who is willing to work with organisers to come up with something new for an event."

Many of the crews will have little or no knowledge of the 66 stage miles on Saturday, but Heppenstall reckons that Sunday will be the toughest day of the rally. "It's the longest day with 88 stage miles and every stage is over 10 miles long. Sunday is 17 miles of Kershope run twice, followed by 17 miles of Kielder and 10 miles of Harwood with the last two then repeated. The Kershope stage is in lovely condition and hasn't been used for two years since the 2021 event."

Mount Common, north of Kielder Water, includes quite a lot of new mileage for this event. "The first four miles have never been used and the last two miles have not been used for many years," says Heppenstall. "Harwood has always been well received: we've changed the stage this year. It's a bit longer because we've put a loop into the middle, which has never been used before."

However, Monday is perhaps even more intense and is certainly the sting in the tail with 77 stage miles before a 1500hrs finish in Carlisle. Heppenstall says: "They've done a lot of harvesting in Shepherdshield, nearly all the trees have gone. Then we're south of the water for the rest of the day, with traditional Pundershaw, Roughside and Hopehouse stages. Crews will be doing those three with no service.

"The final loop of stages is still being finalised but we have the option of joining some stages up to make a longer stage. We're in discussion with the forestry and Motorsport UK and we're looking at various options for linking some of the stages together for a big final stage.

"We couldn't get the Yorkshire forests to start off, which delayed us a little while. But I'm really pleased we've been able to put on over 350 stage miles. It will be the longest event we've ever had. I think we've come up with a very, very good challenge for this year's event." ■

> "We have come up with new things..."
>
> Colin Heppenstall

Kershope kicks off on Sunday

THE ROUTE IN DETAIL

STAGE	NAME	DISTANCE	FIRST CAR
Wednesday November 22			
Ceremonial start, Carmarthen town centre			1900
Thursday November 23 (47 stage miles)			
SS1	Crychan 1	10.75	0944
SS2	No spectators	3.10	1011
SS3	Walters Arena 1	8.00	1208
SS4	No spectators	3.00	1306
SS5	Crychan 2	10.75	1348
SS6	No spectators	3.10	1415
SS7	Walters Arena 2	8.00	1537
Friday November 24 (77 stage miles)			
SS8	Esgair Berfaud	5.19	0920
SS9	Myherin 1	11.66	1100
SS10	Hafren 1	16.13	1228
SS11	Hafren South 1	8.31	1303
SS12	Myherin 2	11.66	1447
SS13	Hafren 2	16.13	1605
SS14	Hafren South 2	8.31	1640
Saturday November 25 (66 stage miles)			
SS15	Ae	8.50	0839
SS16	Dalbeattie	4.60	1008
SS17	Glen Gap 1	7.00	1037
SS18	Glencaird Hill 1	10.75	1255
SS19	Arroch Hill 1	8.85	1332
SS20	Glen Gap 2	7.00	1517
SS21	Glencaird Hill 2	10.75	1655
SS22	Arroch Hill 2	8.85	1732
Sunday November 26 (88 stage miles)			
SS23	Kershope 1	16.81	0834
SS24	Kershope 2	16.81	1140
SS25	Mount Common 1	16.57	1246
SS26	Harwood 1	10.86	1407
SS27	Mount Common 2	16.57	1648
SS28	Harwood 2	10.86	1809
Monday November 27 (77 stage miles)			
SS29	Shepherdshield	6.50	0844
SS30	Pundershaw	14.18	0907
SS31	Roughside	10.09	0937
SS32	Hopehouse	8.08	1006
SS33/34/35	tba	37.89	1250

Please note: these times and distances are provisional and may change. Spectator access is planned for all special stages except SS2, SS4 and SS6. The exact format of the final stages on Monday is still to be confirmed.

Walters Arena is always a popular stage

Jason Pritchard will be fighting for glory

Photos: Toyota Gazoo Racing, Jakob Ebrey

SPEEDWORKS READY TO POWER INTO 2023

Matt James gets the lowdown on a ramped-up assault from the BTCC squad

The revamped Corolla is ready

There is an understated confidence permeating from Speedworks ahead of the 2023 British Touring Car Championship. The Toyota GB-backed squad has not only commissioned its own engine programme for the fresh campaign, it will also be mounting its most serious assault yet in an expanded three-car attack.

Its 2022 driver Rory Butcher, who was fifth in the standings last season, will once again be joined by Ricky Collard and a third machine will be added for George Gamble, who was a race winner in his maiden BTCC year in 2022 at the wheel of a Ciceley Motorsport BMW 330e M Sport.

While that represents an expanded armada of machines, perhaps the most significant step is a move to a Neil Brown Engines-developed two-litre turbocharged motor that comes from the Toyota range. The team has previously used the off-the-peg M-Sport-tended powerplant, but this year it will have more control over the engine and that has proved to be crucial in recent BTCC seasons.

The team is full of high hopes ahead of the fresh campaign. Team boss Christian Dick explains why.

"Generally speaking, people with their own engine programmes have done better historically in the championship," he points out. "Fundamentally it is about having control and with your own programme you can have control of the direction you want to go with your engine, whether that be from performance, reliability or whatever else you wanted to do with it, and that could be options or maps or anything.

"The BTCC TOCA [M-Sport] engine is a fantastic concept and it works superbly well, but we got to a point where we wanted more of that control ourselves. It gives us the chance to control our own destiny and be master of our own fate."

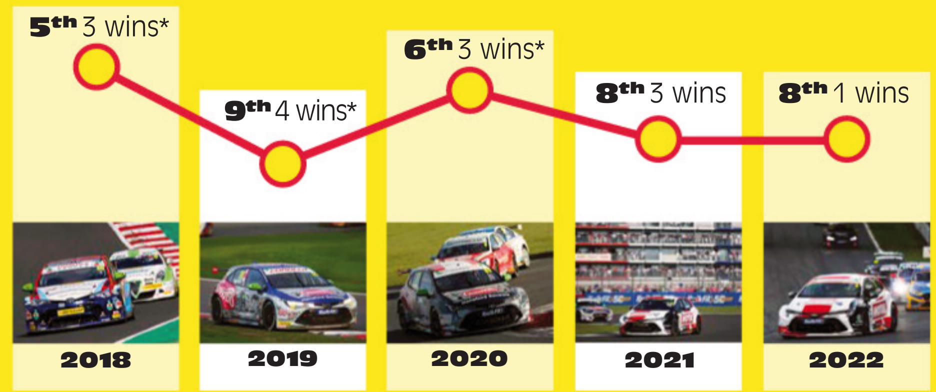
The programme has caught the attention of the drivers too. Scotsman Butcher is a 10-time race winner in the BTCC and is bouncing with optimism ahead of 2023.

"On paper this engine should be a real step forward for the whole programme," he says. "The team has made a massive investment and has taken control of the engine package, which I think is the right thing to do. We are really hopeful that it will give us an edge."

> **"We will have a good title shot"**
>
> **Rory Butcher**

SPEEDWORKS FORM IN THE BTCC

The last five years:



* = single-car entry

The hard yards that have been put in over the winter have given Butcher only one aim: "It has to be the drivers' title and we want to fight for the manufacturers' crown as well. This championship is so hard, but I feel like I have really learned a lot about what it takes to win the title over my five years in the BTCC.

"It is not about the one-off wins and results – although they are great – it is about the consistency. Last year, we manage to string together 29 points scores in a row. This year, we just need those points scores to be a little higher so that we can really gun for the championship. I feel like the team has done its job, the package is stronger, and I can add that to what I have learned from my side and use that. I think we have a really, really good shot."

Gamble will handle Toyota

Collard, meanwhile, had a frustrating season in 2022. After shelving plans to emigrate to Australia, the 26-year-old has been tempted to push those plans even further back by the enthusiasm shown surrounding the whole programme and has signed up for another year.

"It's no secret that some tough times last year made me seriously question my future in racing and whether or not I should carry on, but there were also a lot of positives," says Collard. "Over the winter, I realised I wanted to give this my very best shot in a competitive package, which is what I believe we've got. The Corolla clearly has great potential and I really appreciate all the hard work that Toyota GB are putting in.

"Imagine how gutted I would have been to have been sat on a beach on the other side of the world while the Corolla was doing all the winning in the BTCC. I wouldn't have been able to stomach that!"

For Gamble, 26, switching to a front-wheel-drive car means he has yet more learning to do within the BTCC, but he was the stand-out rookie last term and he has already been impressed with the dedication of the Cheshire-based squad.

Gamble says: "Joining Speedworks is a mega opportunity for me in only my second year in the championship. To be associated with one of the world's leading manufacturers – which is successful in pretty much everything it turns its hand to – is massive, and I think I'm in a really good position. It takes a season to properly acclimatise to the BTCC because it's just so different to any other series and the racing is incredibly hard, but now I know much more what to expect so can hopefully hit the ground running. There's tremendous motivation inside this team; everybody really wants to win, and it's great to be in such a competitive environment. I'm really excited."

Boss Christian Dick has made a significant investment

Dick says that the team had long-held plans to up the ante to three entries and it nearly came to fruition for the 2022 campaign. But he says that the time is right now, and the increased fleet of the British-built Japanese hatchbacks will give Speedworks a fighting chance in the manufacturers' contest too. The increased demands of three cars aren't something that he has taken lightly.

"It is every bit as much work and growth going from two to three cars as going from one to two cars – although I know that doesn't add up percentage-wise," explains the team boss. "You get to a point where you have less people who can cover multiples roles and you have to grow the team.

"Then you have to build up the collection of spares because the chances of collecting accident damage grows significantly too, the same with failures. You have to make sure all of those parts are on the truck. We have been on a recruitment drive for a while and we have some really really good staff onboard who we are pleased to have. We are in a very positive place and it is very exciting." ■

SCOTT AND ROGER MORAN: A HILLCLIMBING DYNASTY WITH SEVEN BRITISH TITLES

Paul Lawrence poses the questions to two of Britain's best hillclimb drivers of the modern era: the father-and-son team

In the genes: Roger and Scott Moran

For more than a quarter of a century, the Moran name has been at the forefront of British hillclimbing.

It was in 1997, that Roger won the coveted title in his Pilbeam MP72 and he was the last Pilbeam-mounted driver to win the overall title. For 2005, the Morans switched to a Gould GR61 and Roger's son Scott then took a remarkable run of six titles in nine years. In 2015, Alex Summers shared the Nicholson-McLaren-engined GR61 with Scott and gave it a seventh BHC title.

This year, once more, Scott will be one of the top five contenders in the championship in the Gould GR59 he shares with Graham Wynn. Meanwhile, Roger is still busy competing and will take in a mix of events including rallying his Ford Escort Mk2 and Skoda Fabia R5 and hillclimbing his latest project, a Lotus Exige.

They are huge advocates for the sport of hillclimbing, and tremendously popular figures around the paddock.

The Ludlow-based father-and-son pair took time out of their schedules to sit down and answer some questions posed by Motorsport News.

Question: Roger, you must have started in motorsport when you were quite young. When did you first compete?
Steve Green
Via email

Roger Moran: "I did my first rally in 1971. I must have been 19 because I was born in 1952. For some reason we left a disco that we used to go to on weekends and a group of us lads went to watch the Welsh Marches Rally. It was a round of the Motoring News Rally Championship and it was snowing. I was just hooked on it from then and that was it.

"I did a lot of club road rallying through the 1970s in the Motoring News and the Welsh championships. Then they changed all the regulations and we couldn't have four carburettor chokes and decent tyres. That did it for me and that was about 1984."

MN: Did you do any forest rallies?

RM: "I did try a few forest events but I didn't enjoy it because of the damage on the car. Some forest events were really great, but I didn't do many. They were all very different and I remember the Woodpecker, which runs close to where I live, was fantastic and I did that a couple of times. It used really good roads but then some of the ones you did it was like driving on bricks. Then I tried a few events in Ireland and I only did about four or five of those. They were the best events but even back then it was the cost and time of getting there. Even in 1981 or '82 it was a £1500 round trip to Ireland which was a lot of money. I started the motorhome business in 1979."

Question: How did you get into hillclimbing?
Phil Jackson
Via email

RM: "A friend of mine, Bill Morgan, was a very keen hillclimb enthusiast and he kept telling me to stop rallying and do some hillclimbing. I did my first hillclimb in the Escort rally car in about 1989. Then I bought a Delta T79 single-seater as a project and I sort of restored it with an Imp engine and the first time I ever drove it was at Curborough.

"I went off the startline and I got around the first corner, and the belt came off the water pump. I was gutted, but I was so impressed with how this thing could corner.

"We couldn't find a belt anywhere so we took it home and got it fixed. We went back a week later. Of course, I went into that first corner thinking this thing was absolutely on rails. But that was a big mistake and I did a 360-degree spin and ended up somewhere up the straight with this thing pointing in the wrong direction.

"I progressed up the classes and eventually got a Pilbeam in 1993 with a 1600cc Swindon Vauxhall and that won everything in the 1600cc class. I remember in the wet I finished third in a British Championship runoff at Loton Park."

MN: How did you move up to winning the British Hillclimb Championship?

RM: "We bought a car with George Ritchie from Scotland and shared that in 1996. We did the British Hillclimb Championship properly and I finished second to Roy Lane. George then got a bit disillusioned and I bought his share of the Pilbeam. But I couldn't have done it without him at the time. I won the British title in 1997 and persevered with the Pilbeam until 2005. That 1997 season was the last time a Pilbeam won the championship.

"In 2002 I had the new MP88 that Scott started sharing. But then we had the chance of the Gould GR61 that we've still got. In 2011 we were first and second in the championship, with a schedule of 34 runoffs at 17 events. I stopped driving it in 2014 and Alex Summers shared it with Scott in 2015."

Scott Moran: "My wife Deb had our daughter Emily then so I only did a part season and Alex did a full season. It was good, we got on well, and it was good for him. But I think if it had carried on it could have ended in tears, because the year after I wanted to do another full season. One of us was going to push just too much."

> **"I just do the rallies I fancy doing these days"**
>
> **Roger Moran**

Question: When did Roger go back to rallying?
Eric Bourne
Via email

RM: "I bought a Porsche rally car in 2009 and then in 2010 I got the Escort that I've still got now. In 2016 I had a BMW M3 but I sold that to buy the Skoda Fabia R5, which is fantastic. I also tried a Darrian and that was a good little car.

"I just do the rallies that I fancy doing. The Escort has a 2.5-litre Millington engine and they look easy from the outside, but those cars are difficult to drive. I've got a Lotus Exige that I want to use on the hills and I've got another Fabia that we're putting a two-litre engine and we're trying to get MSUK to allow it into the same class as Damien Bradley's Subaru. It looks exactly the same as the R5 but it'll be a bit lighter. Hopefully it should be pretty good."

Question: Scott, what did you compete in before you drove single-seaters?
Derek Roberts
Via email

SM: "I used to watch dad rallying but by the time I was old enough to start he was hillclimbing. I started in about 1995 in Simon Durling's Delta for a couple of years and then my sister Marie, who is a couple of years younger than me, fancied a go and so we got a little crossflow Caterham. We did a few events, but she didn't gel with it and had a couple of spins.

"It was a circuit car to start with and it took a bit of sorting out to get it handling right and it was obviously very stiff. Trevor Willis was in the class and he was at the front winning and so I aspired to be like Trev! I think it was at a wet Prescott that I couldn't get this thing to go round tight corners, I was having to try and Scandinavian flick it into stuff. It just didn't want to go. Anyway, dad said to just take the anti-roll bar off the front and immediately I went from the back end of the class up into the top three.

"So we got that somewhere near sorted and I was regularly scoring points once we realised what we were doing with it. The following year, we got another circuit car with a Vauxhall engine. We put a K Series in there and a six-speed Caterham gearbox, obviously still H-pattern, and a rollcage in there.

"In the first couple of events I was struggling and it was going straight on everywhere. We didn't hit anything and it just took a bit of sorting and we got that really well sorted. There was me and Trev, Simon Rutland and Will Hall. I think 2001 was my last year in that car and I was unbeaten that year."

MN: Scott, have you ever tried rallying?

SM: "I've done a little bit, but I've only really done events at Anglesey circuit. I've had a second and then a third overall. So, it's been good.

"It's funny, because that Escort is a rocketship. But after the Gould, it's slow. I was quite concerned, because I drove it once at Prescott and it felt alien to me. It just felt like I was sat on top of it rather than down in it on the floor. And it felt really weird. When we went to Anglesey it took a bit of getting used to.

"It feels OK now. But the bit that worried me was because it doesn't feel

continued on page 18

Photos: Paul and Ben Lawrence

Roger in the Delta, his first single-seater

Pilbeam warrior: Roger in the 1600cc MP62

VINK
MORAN Motorhomes
F131 UDL
Roger rallying on the Isle of Man in his BMW M3

PROTYRE
MORAN Motorhomes
MORAN MOTORHOMES
MM18 WKC

Roger in his Skoda R5 on the 2022 North West Stages

fast, is it going to stop and go around the corners? But it's all relative and it was fine though I did manage to find something to hit at Anglesey."

Question: Scott: what was it like first time in a big single-seater?
Ian Jenkins
Via email
SM: "It was unbelievable and I couldn't understand how anyone could drive one quickly!

"By 2001 I was with Deb and we wanted to buy a house. So the Caterham was the deposit for the house and when it went and I hadn't really planned to do anything else.

"Dad was in the middle of having a Pilbeam MP88 built with the V6, the same engine as Graeme Wight Jr won the championship with in 2001 and 2002. The plan was to stick with the Pilbeam and dad said well: 'If you want to do anything, share with me.'

"So I jumped from a road-going Caterham straight into a state-of-the-art single-seater. I'd only ever experienced dad's championship-winning car with a four-litre Judd at Curborough on a Triple C magazine test. We had a bit of a drive around behind a little Peugeot taking photos and then dad said to have a bit of a go.

"I remember him saying when you come out of the hairpin at the top, pop it into third gear. I just squeezed the throttle and it just went. I thought 'Wow!' I'd got the visor slightly cracked open, and it slammed the visor shut and I thought: 'I'm going to the moon!'

"I pulled fourth gear thinking it would be a bit calmer in fourth gear, which is probably like 130mph and it just went again. I couldn't comprehend how anyone could drive this thing. That was a big step as I'd only driven my Delta and the Caterham at the time. But I was bitten by the bug and thought it was incredible."

MN: So you started sharing the car with your dad…
SM: "In 2002 we got the Pilbeam with a V6 engine and I just had to bring it back in one piece every time because dad was after another British championship. I was gradually building speed and in 2003 we'd got it somewhere near sorted and it was pretty good. But by then we'd ordered the four-litre Judd to go in it and that came in 2004. That was a backward step, nothing to do with the engine it was just the chassis.

"It worked when you put good new tyres on. But other than that, it was just horrible. It was very fast in a straight line and it was basically the same engine we've got now."

Question: When did you start using the Gould?
Paul Morgan
Via email
SM: "We were planning to put the Gould GR61 together for 2006 but when we started pulling the Pilbeam apart the end of 2004 there was a few things we found that we didn't really like. We already had the tub for the Gould from Ralt. It's a 1999 tub, built for F3 and they never actually used it.

"Ralt was building this car ready for the British Formula 3 Championship and of course then Dallara tuned up [and dominated the market]. It's exactly the same tub as the GR55. I really found my feet in that car. The Pilbeam was really difficult to drive and then I got in the GR61 and it just gelled. We tried to progress with the Pilbeam MP88, but the Gould GR51 had already come out and moved the goalposts. We were in a losing battle."
RM: "But of course I didn't realise that at the time and poor Mike Pilbeam was saying 'Well, we'll just try this and we'll just try that', and it just never worked.

"When we had the V6 in it we could never get on a par with Graeme Wight in the Gould GR51. But then one day when we'd already decided to put the four-litre in it, but just before we did that right at the end of that season Mike Pilbeam sent me this little box with some brackets to relocate the rear wishbones. We went to Shelsley and were straight into the 24s with the V6, but the car didn't feel any different. And then we took it to Prescott and I thought it must have been me, I'd had a good day. Then we took it to Prescott again for the last round of the British Championship and in first practice it was straight in the 37s or 38s."

Question: Scott, would you like a seventh British Hillclimb title?
Anne Workman
Via email
SM: "Well, six is a record equal to Tony Marsh. It would be nice to get number seven but if I don't do it, it's not the end of the world. I never expected to win one, so to do six was

> **"I couldn't understand how the car could go so quickly"**
>
> **Scott Moran**

Scott Moran spent early career competing in a road-going Caterham

Scott Moran's first hillclimb single-seater was the Delta

Roger MORAN
MORAN MOTORHOMES
"THE MIKE SONES MEMORIAL" AGBO STAGES RALLY
Owen Motoring Club
3

Roger competing at Weston Park earlier this year

amazing. The GR61 was just an incredible package all the way through. Now, I'm very fortunate that Graham Wynn offered me the opportunity to drive his GR59 as we'd reached the limit of what the GR61 could do."

Question: Scott, Was there ever any doubt that you would follow your dad into motorsport?
Gregg Jenkins
Via email
SM: "Well, I suppose there could have been as I used to do some mountain biking and, in fact, I still do. I used to compete in national championships downhill but I was never any good and I was always mid-pack. I think it was in '97 I was racing at a local track and had a big accident and broke my collarbone. That stopped me riding my bike for probably 12 months. We'd got the Caterham by this time. So it was one of these things. Had I not broken my collarbone I might have stayed with the mountain bike."

Question: What have been your most memorable moments?
Ian Bloor
Via email
SM: "When we finished first and second in the championship in 2011. That was our biggest achievement because it's never been done before or since. It's hard to do it in the same car. Then, for me, winning the title in 2008 and 2009, those were the toughest seasons.

"I missed out in 2007. It was close and I finished second to Martin Groves. That was really difficult because he was hard to beat everywhere. He didn't like being put under pressure but it didn't seem to slow him down! At somewhere like Shelsley he didn't want to see my time before he took his run. I like to know what other people have done, but he didn't. It was a distraction to him."

Question: What does it take to do Shelsley Walsh in under 23 seconds?
Paresh Sivas
Via email
SM: "It's just commitment, really. It's all really important and there's no way you can do it if you're a little bit off anywhere. You've got to carry your speed through Kennel and Crossing and there's a lot of time in the Esses. It's all about getting clean drive there because it's so steep.

"When we first broke into the 22s that was in June 2007. That was the day when my sole intention was to go home with the record and I did a 22.83s. But Grovesy broke it a couple of times after that.

"The June meeting was when they first resurfaced the hill and this was before we had traction control and paddleshift and all this. But it felt like the car was going to break in half because there was just so much grip.

"You could just floor it coming out of Top Ess. On a normal day, you would just sit there spinning the wheels. When they resurfaced it, that first year or so you could just come out in second or third gear and floor it and it would just go.

"That June 2007 Shelsley meeting, I think between us we broke the record five times. There were other people under the record, but there was only me and Martin went home sub 23s. Now,

Scott is a six-time British champion

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Scott on a record-breaking run at Gurston Park

Scott Moran on the brakes heading into the famous Bottom Ess bends at Shelsley Walsh

Scott shares the Gould GR59 with Graham Wynn throughout the British Hillclimb Championship

there are eight people under 23 seconds and another 11, including dad, in the 23s."

Question: What mental preparation do you go through before each run?

Harry Barkin

Via email

SM: "There's a lot of people like dad and David Grace who used to put a run through their mind first. Just do the run in your head, getting the right gears and doing the braking. But actually, when you leave the line, you don't think about that. You don't have time to think about anything!

"If you looked at the data, when dad and I were sharing the car, the times are always really close. From outside, the car looks to be doing the same thing. But you look at the data, how we're doing it is completely different. And yet you're ending up with the same time."

MN: How different are your driving styles then?

SM: "I was never as quick as dad in the quick bits but then I got away from him and it was the way I was modulating the throttle at somewhere like Hollow at Gurston Down.

"I won't lift completely there whereas dad used to come right off the throttle and then back on. As soon as you shut the throttle, the aero is like a brake."

RM: "The fastest I've ever been through Hollow, and I really had to push myself to do it and not shut the throttle, was 118mph. The fastest Scott's been into there was 131mph and as a result of that he was then doing 149mph into the braking area at the bottom of the Carousel. It's the same at Crossing at Shelsley."

Question: Have you ever done a perfect run?

David Harris

Via email

SM: "There's always another tenth! Saying that, Shelsley in 2007 was probably as good as I was going to get that day. There was also a Loton record that was pretty good.

"Jos Goodyear was in the 1600cc Raptor and as I'd qualified quickest I had time to go and watch Jos. With the speed he took through the right hander I thought he's not turning left at Keepers, that's going in the trees. But it turned left and it just went and then I stood there listening and I thought: 'He hasn't lifted yet. The straight isn't this long!' And he'd held it right over the top.

"He'd kept it pinned from the moment he left Keepers all the way through the kink on Cedar Straight. We can't hold our car flat through the kink. And he flat was all the way over the top and well into the braking area for Fallow Corner."

RM: "Honestly, when I heard the time I didn't actually believe it because the record at the time was Scott's 44.2s and I just did a 44.6s and I was really pleased with that. Then Jos's time came and it was 43.8s and I thought it was a mistake. And then of course, Jos was doing cartwheels across the grass."

SM: "I was waiting in the paddock to run and I remember Will Hall saying to me: 'you've got a bit to do!'"

RM: "I'd worked out a little cut at the top of the braking area, just on the left, putting two wheels on the grass as you come up over the crest. I said: 'It's a bit risky, and it might knock the bottom of the car a bit. But if you want a straight line in that braking area, that's how you're going to have to do it.' I just clattered the bottom of the car and then Scott went up and did a 43.5s."

SM: "Then the same happened at Doune. I think the record was about 36.5s. They'd resurfaced the hill. I remember going up in practice and thinking I can't keep up with this. Because there's just so much grip,

Roger Moran tackles the Epynt Ranges in his Darrian in 2019

and that bottom bit of the hill is like a video game.

"Then Jos went up and he was under the record at about 35.5s. So then I did a 34.99s and thought: 'I don't want to do that again!'

"Jos went up in the afternoon runoff and he did a 35.05s and I thought if I'm going to win this, I've got to repeat what I did this morning and I didn't really want to do that. It was on the limit and ended up being a 34.76s. That's been beaten since but it was an incredible seat-of-the-pants job."

Question: Any plans to use your Gould GR61 again?

Andy Hawkes

Via email

SM: "Not at the moment, but I think it's still good enough for top five. It might win here or there but it's not going to be a consistent winner. You could go and do the Midland Championship with it and that would be quite good. It's staying in the family!"

Question: Scott, who have been big influences in your career?

Jilly Barber

Via email

SM: "Obviously dad and then Roy Lane. You know, Roy was Mr Hillclimb. We spent lots of time with the Lane family. We used to walk the hills with them and all sorts of things. I learned a massive amount from Roy but he was canny and he wouldn't tell you everything!"

> **"The biggest buzz has to be the Doune hill"**
>
> **Scott Moran**

Question: Who are, and have been, your biggest rivals?

Jonathan Smalley

Via email

SM: "Obviously first off there was Trevor Willis and obviously dad and then Martin Groves. Currently it's really tough. You've got Alex Summers and Wallace Menzies.

"I think there's a very small window where Wallace's car works and it works well. I think they work hard to find that sweet spot. Wallace drives it very well.

"Alex has driven lots of different things and he's very, very good. You just have to see what he did in that McMurtry at the Goodwood Festival of Speed last summer [where he set a new hill record]. There's not many people who could get in that and do what he did."

MN: What about the rising stars of hillclimbing?

SM: "Matt Ryder, without question, [is a name for the future]. He's never really had the car to show his potential in the past. He has surprised me a little bit because he's just got into the Gould and it has gelled. This year, he's going be stronger again."

Question: What's the big appeal of hillclimbing?

Phil Davey

Via email

SM: I think it's just the fact you can do it. You can start in anything and you can go on to drive something that's basically a Formula 1 car. And we're all in the same paddock where, you know, we're all together. It's a massive challenge from the driving and the technical side and you're always searching for something more."

RM: "It's a lot easier than rallying! Hillclimbing is so much more relaxed."

SM: "It's amazing how quickly the time goes. People ask: 'What do you do?' Because you're only having three minutes on the hill. But there's always something to be doing."

Question: Which are your favourite hills to compete on?

Jenny Brown

Via email

SM: "I like them all for different reasons. The biggest buzz is always going to be Doune. If you're going to say to someone: 'One hill you've got to do at some point,' it is Doune. I really enjoy Harewood, Loton and Prescott. Craigantlet is really good.

"My least favourite to drive is probably Bouley Bay. In our car you just can't get the car going. It's stop-start and it doesn't flow to me. In a Mk2 Escort it's probably brilliant. But it's a lovely place with a great atmosphere. Everybody's got the same challenge."

Question: Scott, do either your son or daughter show any interest in extending the Moran story?

Sue Harrison

Via email

SM: "My son Ollie is 12 now and he already knows that you can go rallying at 14. So he's quite keen. Emily doesn't really show that much interest, but I would think she might be quite good at it as well as she's a bit bonkers!"

MN: You tried being a passenger in a sporting trial recently, what did you think of that?

SM: "I've known Alastair Moffatt for years and he said to come and have a go. It's unbelievable where they will go. Because it was dry when we went, it was quite tricky. Darren Underwood, the clerk of the course, worked quite hard at giving them a challenge.

"Two of the sections we messed up because we got on the wrong side of an intermediate gate, so we lost a nine on the one and a five on another. So we think we should have been about fourth overall, which would have been good. To be fair, I don't think I did a lot, it was because Alastair's an expert at it. I wouldn't sit with just *anybody*!"

Question: What did you think to the FIA Hillclimb Masters?

Roger Walker

Via email

SM: "It's very good! I did three out of the four. I was second overall in the first one in 2014 at Eschdorf in Luxembourg. I didn't realise until I looked back at the results that all the big names of European hillclimbing were there, like Christian Merli, but they probably weren't in the right equipment. I think if we went back there now, we'd be a lot quicker than we were.

"But it was all about getting used to the speeds. At the top of the straight we were probably doing 150mph then you'd go through a 70mph left-right and then back up to 150mph again and it was just what the car is made for. It was fantastic. They were unfortunate with the weather there and we only had four runs. It was just under two kilometres, so it was quite short.

"Then we went to Sternberk in the Czech Republic and I got a gold medal there and then I had a silver medal in Gubbio in Italy behind Will Hall.

"But I was off the pace there and I struggled a bit with Gubbio because it was so quick. There was a lot of really quick corners, but I hadn't got the sequence completely dialled. We didn't practice but we found out that some people had been driving the hill overnight. It wasn't illegal: they were just better prepared.

"The first one we went to at Eschdorf we were late for some reason. We went up there on our bikes and I rode it five times. We actually drove up there the night before looking for wherever we were going to park!

"They are fantastic events. Incredible. I didn't do the last one at Braga in Portugal. Graham Wynn, who owns the Gould I now share, was quite keen for me to have gone but there was just so much going on everywhere else."

MN: Will you go again if you get the chance?

SM: "I don't think there will be another one at the moment. But there's a lot of people working behind the scenes to try and get it off the ground again. But the FIA has canned it at the moment, unfortunately. It's a lot of hassle and everything to get there but it's all worth it when you're actually there on the event days."

Question Any chance of a closed-road hillclimb in the UK?

Simon Downey

Via email

SM: "You could do it here in Ludlow! Take over the town square and run the cars up over Whitcliffe Common. It would be brilliant. There are plenty of places you could do it, but it's finding somewhere that's not going to upset too many people.

"On the Guernsey Rally a few weeks back I think they had quite a lot of issues with locals. Then there were other parts of the route where people closed their businesses early and embraced it. And they said what a fantastic thing it was coming past the front door." ■

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Our 12-page special breaks down the barriers to motorsport competition, starts p15

Brackley-based team plots evolution to regain lost ground to Red Bull and Ferrari

MERCEDES AIMS TO BOUNCE BACK BY STICKING TO DESIGN PRINCIPLES

Wraps came off the new Mercedes W14 racer

By Matt James

Mercedes F1 bosses say the team's new W14 design has ironed out the flaws from its 2022 challenger and will give drivers Lewis Hamilton and George Russell the chance to fight for grand prix wins.

The team slipped to third in the constructors' chase last year after eight straight constructors' titles. The 2022 W13 was prone to bouncing in the early part of the campaign but work by engineers ironed out the phenomenon by the end of the campaign.

Now the new W14 has taken design philosophies from the previous machine and team chiefs say it will be a step forward.

Technical director Mike Elliott said: "At times last year, we were questioning ourselves and saying: 'Do we have to tear it all up and start again?' But you know if you do that, you are going to go backwards. Although we had problems last year, we know there is a lot of goodness in the car.

"We've looked at the problems we had last year and how best to ensure we solved them."

Full story, page 4

Lewis Hamilton

KELSEYmedia

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STARS TO SHINE AT RACE RETRO

We look ahead to the historic showpiece, p14

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Photos: Ben Lawrence

RALLY NORTH WALES: BRITISH HISTORIC RALLY CHAMPIONSHIP BY PAUL LAWRENCE **MARCH 25**

Joe Price was back atop historics

Richard Tuthill took on the Escorts

PRICE RETURNS IN STYLE TO TOP HISTORICS ON RALLY NORTH WALES

In only his second rally in four years, Joe Price stormed back to the head of the historic field on Rally North Wales and fended off Roger Chilman by just three seconds after a fine contest between the two Ford Escort Mk2 drivers.

In an action-packed Rally North Wales, the second round of the British Historic Rally Championship, the forests of Dyfnant, Gartheiniog and Dyfi offered a fabulous challenge with quality roads run in testing conditions after heavy overnight rain.

Price and co-driver Chris Brooks were a late entry for the event on what was only Price's second rally since 2019. Despite being far from match fit they were well in the hunt over the opening eight-mile stage in Dyfnant as Nick Elliott and Dave Price set the initial pace in the Fiat 131.

Chilman and Patrick Walsh and Robert Gough/Paul Morris were right in the mix. However Dyfnant set a different tone for several crews, including rallying returnee Richard Tuthill and co-driver Stephane Prevot, who dropped over six minutes when they slid off at a slow chicane. It took some manpower to get their Porsche 911 back into the rally.

Meanwhile, Martin McCormack and Barney Mitchell punctured mid-stage and limped out but were caught right at the finish by top seeds, Jason Pritchard and Phil Clarke. While McCormack lost well over a minute, Pritchard lost a few seconds as the two Escorts crossed the finish line nose to tail.

Tuthill made a point by then going fastest in the flowing Gartheiniog stage but Chilman, Gough and Price were right in the mix and it was Chilman who claimed the advantage in Big Ray by taking six seconds out of Price. Dyfi Main followed before service in Dolgellau and it was Price who set a blistering pace to win the stage and arrive at service just five seconds behind Chilman.

For the leading crews the second run of Gartheiniog was unfortunately cancelled after Craig Jones put his Escort Mk1 into a ditch and injured his back so crews then headed into second runs of Big Ray and Dyfi Main. Price pulled a second back on Chilman in Big Ray but it was the six miles of Dyfi Main that proved pivotal as Price once again proved the master of the flowing stage and was seven seconds quicker than Chilman to go ahead by just three seconds, with only a reverse run of Dyfnant to conclude the rally.

Amazingly, Price and Chilman both stopped the clocks on 8ms22s to leave Price with just a three-second margin of victory at the finish. Price said: "I was very rusty but we seemed to get back into it very well. It is hard after so much time away but after a couple more rallies we'll be back right."

Elliott was relieved to grab third after a throttle problem cost him time through the morning Gartheiniog and Dyfi stages and then a stall cost further time in the afternoon. "It's a better result than we deserved," said Elliott.

Pritchard was more than happy to slot into fourth on his first rally for seven months and his first time back in a Ford Escort since rolling in these stages on the 2021 Roger Albert Clark Rally. "We were just building confidence all day," said Pritchard after stepping up his pace through the rally.

Gough and Morris were only three seconds back in fifth, while Richard Jordan and James Gratton-Smith had a clear run to take sixth as a close group of cars packed out the top 10. McCormack and Mitchell fought back to eighth, but it was a case of what might have been for their final 1m09s deficit to Price was probably what they lost with the puncture on the opening stage.

Tuthill could never claw back the time that he lost but setting two stage fastest times through the day proved that the Porsche is still very much a contender in his hands.

Notable drives in the classes included Ben and Steven Smith who took C3 in their Pinto-powered Ford Escort Mk1 while Mike Stuart and Sinclair Young took C5 in their BDA-powered version. Stephen and Oli Benton were best of the Pinto-powered Mk2s while Ben Jemison and Dean Kellett took D4 in their Vauxhall Chevette over the delayed Tuthill.

RESULTS

British Historic Rally Championship, round 2

POS	DRIVER/CO-DRIVER	CAR	TIME
1	Joe Price/Chris Brooks	Ford Escort Mk2	51m14s
2	Roger Chilman/Patrick Walsh	Ford Escort Mk2	+3s
3	Nick Elliott/Dave Price	Fiat 131	+34s
4	Jason Pritchard/Phil Clarke	Ford Escort Mk2	+49s
5	Robert Gough/Paul Morris	Ford Escort Mk2	+52s
6	Richard Jordan/James Gratton-Smith	Ford Escort Mk2	+1m04s
7	Tom Walster/Chris Ridge	Ford Escort Mk2	+1m07s
8	Martin McCormack/Barney Mitchell	Ford Escort Mk2	+1m09s
9	Adrian Hetherington/Ronan O'Neill	Ford Escort Mk2	+1m11s
10	Rudi Lancaster/Guy Weaver	Ford Escort Mk2	+1m31s

Class winners: Ian Beveridge/Paul Price (Toyota Corolla); Ben Smith/Steven Smith (Ford Escort Mk1); Mike Stuart/Sinclair Young (Ford Escort Mk1); Chris Squires/Shaun Hughes (Ford Escort Mk2); Stephen Benton/Oli Benton (Ford Escort Mk2); Ben Jemison/Dean Kellett (Vauxhall Chevette); Brynmor Pierce/Matt Baddeley (Peugeot 309GTi); Elliott/Price; Paul Thompson/Josh Davison (Ford Escort Mk2).

Roger Chilman maintained his historics points lead

MODERN RALLY

Matthew Hirst and Declan Dear topped the moderns

Hirst dominates modern section of forest clash

Matthew Hirst and Declan Dear swept to a commanding victory in the modern element of Rally North Wales, finally arriving back in Welshpool with a winning margin more than two minutes.

Hirst's third win on the event was the perfect opening to his bid for a third Welsh Championship and once early challengers Jordan and Paul Hone had steering failure in Big Ray, Hirst and Dear were unchallenged.

Irishman Hone, on a rare UK gravel outing in his Fiesta R5, grabbed a two-second lead on Dyfnant but his rally was over two stages later and Hirst was left to dominate the rally. "We've had a hassle-free day," said Hirst, who was able to try some new Pirelli tyres as he just tried to keep it neat and tidy once his lead was established.

Into second on a day for getting seat time went Alan Carmichael and Claire Williams in their Hyundai i20 R5 while Kevin Procter and Jamie Edwards rounded out the podium in their Fiesta S2000. With his Ford Sapphire Cosworth not ready, Procter took his Fiesta back onto gravel for his first Welsh rally for nearly two decades.

Boyd Kershaw and Keegan Rees were the best of the modern two-wheel-drive crews in their Ford Escort Mk2 while the Mini Challenge crews competed over the first loop of stages. Mick Smith and Paul Stringer were convincing winners, emerging with a 1m42s margin over Jacob Neal and Russell Thompson.

Results

1 Matthew Hirst/Declan Dear (Ford Fiesta R5) 48m27s; 2 Alan Carmichael/Claire Williams (Hyundai i20 R5) +2m05s; 3 Kevin Procter/Jamie Edwards (Ford Fiesta S2000T); 4 Simon Rogers/Jack Bowen (Mitsubishi Lancer E6); 5 Martyn Andrews/Steve Greenhill (Subaru Impreza); 6 Wug Utting/Bob Stokoe (Subaru Impreza); 7 Boyd Kershaw/Keegan Rees (Ford Escort Mk2); 8 David Tomlin/Keith Ashley (Ford Fiesta R5); 9 Peter Bayliss/Paul Godden (Mitsubishi Lancer E9); 10 Jonathan Brace/Paul Spooner (Ford Escort Mk2). **Class winners**: Gethin Price/Stephen Brown (Nissan Micra); Tony Simpson/Stefan Arndt (Ford Fiesta); Julian Birley/Emyr Hall (Talbot Sunbeam); Chris Davies/Remy Thomissen (Ford Escort Mk1); Jonathan Whalley/Peter Dennis (Ford Escort Mk2); Brace/Spooner; Barry Stevenson-Wheeler/John Pickavance (Ford Escort Mk2); Dan Jones/Cyril Jones (Vauxhall Nova); Kershaw/Rees; Andrew Fox/Jaime Lee-Fox (BMW 325i); Rogers/Bowen; Hirst/Dear; Mick Smith/Paul Stringer (BMW Mini Cooper S).

NATIONAL HOT RODS: HEDNESFORD BY GRAHAM BROWN

MARCH 26

COOKE WINS TIGHT BATTLE TO THE FINISH

It may have been bitterly cold at Hednesford on Sunday but the final was as hot as anyone could have wanted, an almost-race-long, four-way lead battle going the way of Perry Cooke after he eventually overcame the toughest of challenges from Billy Wood, Paul Wright and Rob McDonald. Karl Baker and Carl Waller-Barrett were the heat winners, the latter after another of his superb last-lap charges.

The opening heat was led away by Barry Limer, who looked well in control until things went very wrong when Ashley Shaw and Nick Roots collided sparking off a monster pile up *(see page 12)*. After a lengthy clear up they set off again with Limer still on point. Erstwhile second man Alistair Lowe was overwhelmed by the following pack, Baker moving up to second ahead of Joey Palmer, while Billy Wood was making big strides forwards as well. Baker got onto the leader's tail but suddenly Limer was out with no brakes, leaving Baker comfortably clear of Palmer at the flag.

A surprising number of the damaged cars were fit for heat two with Limer straight into the lead this time and Alastair Lowe tracking him as before. The man to watch though was Waller-Barrett, CW-B cutting through from the blue grade to attack the placemen. But Nick Roots – clearly finding his feet in Nationals now – proved a more obstinate opponent than maybe anyone was expecting, and was still defending second spot at mid-distance.

Eventually Waller-Barrett saw the chink of daylight he was looking for down the inside at the West Bend exit, putting him second. He wasted no time carving into the leader's advantage and indeed had no time to waste with only four laps to run. It really did look as though he was going to run out of laps but he, with another of his becoming trademark last-lap outside-line charges, just managed to pip Limer on the line, this time by a mere 0.058 seconds.

The final was actually won in a first-turn clinch after polesitter Baker, Wood and Cooke went rubbing three-wide into the bend, putting Cooke into the lead. Wood immediately piled on the pressure to try and redress that situation while a series of early skirmishes behind them brought McDonald through to third and Wright into fourth. That was the scene set for a breathtaking flat-out dice the rest of the way.

Wright managed to slip past McDonald when the World champ stayed outside a bit too long. McDonald passed him back again, before Wright went by once more to attack Cooke and Wood. There was no let up in the pace passing the halfway mark but eventually it was the cars that started to wilt.

Wood's and Wright's both developed oil leaks onto their left rear tyres making both cars loose, while McDonald no longer looked capable of putting a move on the other two either. Thus Cooke was able to edge clear for the first time four laps from home, going on to take a truly memorable win.

Results

Organiser: Incarace **When:** March 26 **Where:** Hednesford Hills Raceway **Starters:** 28.
Heat one: 1 Karl Baker (Ginetta G40R); 2 Joey Palmer (Ford Fiesta); 3 Hayden Ballard (Vauxhall Tigra); 4 Perry Cooke (Vauxhall Tigra); 5 Rob McDonald (Vauxhall Tigra); 6 Billy Wood (Vauxhall Tigra); 7 Chris Aldridge (Vauxhall Tigra); 8 Paul Wright (Vauxhall Tigra). **Heat two:** 1 Carl Waller-Barrett (Vauxhall Tigra); 2 Barry Limer (Vauxhall Tigra); 3 Nick Roots (Vauxhall Tigra); 4 Wood; 5 Baker; 6 Cooke; 7 McDonald; 8 Aaron Dew (Ginetta G40R). **Final:** 1 Cooke; 2 Wood; 3 Wright; 4 McDonald; 5 Chris Haird (Vauxhall Tigra); 6 Dew; 7 Waller-Barrett; 8 Aldridge; 9 Baker; 10 Ballard. **Points (provisional):** 1 Wood 358; 2 Haird 319; 3 Cooke 318; 4 Dew 315; 5 Kew 278; 6 Aldridge 271.

Photos: mkpics.net

Cooke held off race-long pressure

Wood (305) turned up the heat in the final

BTRDA RALLYCROSS: BLYTON PARK BY HAL RIDGE

MARCH 26

LING PROVES HE IS NO CHICKEN TO OPEN HIS BTRDA RALLYCROSS ACCOUNT AT BLYTON

Ford Fiesta campaigner Fred Ling claimed a maiden outright rallycross victory in the opening round of the BTRDA Clubmans Rallycross Championship at Blyton Park last weekend, heading an all front-wheel-drive Supermodified class podium.

The star of qualifying had been rallycross stalwart Phil Chicken, the Geordie driver putting his Citroen C2 on pole position and it was Chicken that led the final on the opening lap before being overtaken by Ling on the new-look Blyton rallycross layout.

Overall BTRDA champion Gary Cook, meanwhile, spun on the opening tour and would retire soon after, leaving Ling to pull a margin at the front of the order. Chicken held off the attentions of Chris Smith's Honda Civic for second.

Former Production racer Martin Peters made a return to the series for the 2023 opener and put his Citroen Saxo on pole position, from where he led the Production final from the front and overcame a stern challenge from James Orton, while Jonny Chrisp put a broken engine mount in qualifying behind him to finish on the podium.

The best of the finals was arguably in the Classic division, where Lancia Stratos driver John Cross started on the back row of the grid following electrical issues in qualifying but led into the first corner of the final after a blistering start, heading pole-starter Lee Wood. Having pursued the leader early on, with a brilliant overtake mid-race on the loose-surface section, Ford Escort campaigner Wood retook the advantage and drove to victory, challenged all the way by Cross, while Dan Swayland finished third with another Escort.

Much like his father Phil Chicken had in the Supermodified class, Corey Padgett started on pole position for the Junior final but it was Will Ovenden who made the best start from the middle of the front row to seize the lead, a position he would hold until the finish. Padgett finished second on track but was given a one-second penalty post-race that dropped him to third behind Tyler McAlpine. Jimmy Jeakins rolled on the final lap, causing the race to be red flagged and the results declared.

Photo: Kev Hutch

Ling conquered the new-look Blyton layout

It also was from the centre of the front row that Charley Moroney made the best start in the BMW Mini final, bettering polesitter Ben Sayer in the run to Turn 1, the latter becoming involved in a multi-lap battle for second with Dave Ellis. Sayer crossed the finish line in second but was handed a post-race five-second penalty for gaining an unfair advantage and was dropped back to fourth, returning second to Ellis and giving Abbie McGuinness third.

Double 5 Nations BRX Junior champion Max Langmaid claimed a maiden victory in the Modified 4x4 division, driving an All4 Mini, beating Mitsubishi driver Tomas Ramanauskas to the flag, while Chris Smith won the Modified class final. Luke Holly initially took the lead at Turn 1 of the FIA Cross Car final but spun later on the opening tour, handing the lead to pole-starter David Attiwell, who was then passed by Will Butler for the win.

Results

Organiser: MDA **When:** March 26 **Where:** Blyton Park, Lincolnshire **Starters:** 57
Round 1: Super Modified: 1 Fred Ling (Ford Fiesta) 5m12.331s; 2 Phil Chicken (Citroen C2) +7.469s; 3 Chris Smith (Honda Civic); 4 Todd Crooks (BMW Mini); 5 Tony Chrisp (Vauxhall Nova); 6 Gary Cook (Ford Fiesta); **Production:** Martin Peters (Citroen Saxo); **Junior:** Will Ovenden (Suzuki Swift); **Modified:** Chris Smith (Honda Civic); **Modified 4x4:** Max Langmaid (BMW Mini); **BMW Mini:** Charley Moroney (BMW Mini); **Classic:** Lee Wood (Ford Escort); **FIA Cross Car:** Will Butler (YaCarCross).

Photos: Richard Styles

SNETTERTON: CSCC BY MARCUS PYE MARCH 25-26

Christian Pittard beat his brother for wins

BTCC champion Turkington (l) was a star attraction in an unfamiliar BMW

PITTARD ADDS CREAM TO THE JAM SANDWICH

The second slice of Christian Pittard's Magnificent Sevens double win at Snetterton was straightforward, but the first anything but as he wrestled with brother Jonathan. The 350bhp Caterhams, Jonny's supercharged, twitched and writhed as they passed each other repeatedly.

Christian's orange JAM Racing machine took the chequered flag 0.267 seconds clear, with his sibling's stealth bomber homing in. James Tubby, Richard Carter and Jonathan Edwards ran them closest, Edwards delighted with a combative second when Jonny P's car wilted in the return match.

Even closer was the Tin Tops bout in which Danny Cassar (Honda Integra Type R) came within 0.152s of negating his 30s Silverstone winner's penalty, served at the pitstops. Cassar led briefly, but finished on the bumper of Andrew Windmill's Civic Leggera, their shrill high-revving VTEC engines harmonised on the Senna Straight. Both will now have to remain stationary for an extra half minute at the forthcoming Thruxton round, which may bring succour to chasers Adam Brown (Ford Fiesta ST) and James Wilson (Peugeot 206 GTi).

A Peugeot won in Turbo Tin Tops where Carl Chambers overcame clutch master cylinder failure in qualifying to defeat Andrew Marson's tricolore-nosed Abarth Assetto Corse, which puddle-jumped into an early lead and stayed there for eight laps. Marson kept second from John Wyatt's Mini Cooper S R56.

Quadruple British touring car champion Colin Turkington has raced Mark Smith's BMW E30 M3 before, but had not sampled the E36 Evo version until Friday's pre-event testing.

He won the Slicks Series opener at a canter from Army Motorsport's Will Ashmore (Ferrari 360 Challenge) and Jake Severs (Ginetta G50). In the later pitstop race Turkington relayed Smith who completed a double for the AMSpeed/Motorsport Showroom car.

Fifty years after his race debut in a Hillman Imp at Silverstone, Rod Birley won the opening Special Saloons & Modsports race in his E36 M3. Jack Gadd atoned for a spin by winning the sequel in his beautifully presented Escort RSR.

Three New Millennium/Open Series frontrunners were excluded due to Code 60 infringements, while poleman Dave Griffin restarted his BMW E90 M3 on the grass at Riches.

First-past-the-flag Mark Lee (Ginetta G55) had kept his nose clean, however. Behind him, Michael Vitulli (E46 M3) and Turkington/Smith were promoted to second and third.

Griffin, from Adelaide, shot an earlier E36 M3 from 11th to an impressive Modern Classics victory over Tom Mensley's similar car on Sunday.

In Future Classics, Stephen Scott-Dunwoodie blasted his Ford Sierra RS500 clear of Richard Harman's Porsche 944 Turbo, although its gearbox "started to make awful graunching noises" on the penultimate lap.

In a successful debut for the Maldon Salt team's Jaguar E-type, Steve Osborne dominated the Classic K hour – in which Chris Ward drove the final quarter – as well as won the Swinging Sixties Group 2 race solo.

The surviving quick Lotus Elan of Tim and Mark Cousins finished second in Classic K, a lap adrift. Jon Wolfe and Martin Adams were runners-up in the Swinging Sixties race in Wolfe's hairy five-litre TVR Tuscan.

Will Pratt aced the Morgan Challenge opener, but factory chassis guru Tony Kiss was ecstatic to win the sequel under heavy pressure from Martin Pratt (in Will's mount, his having broken) and John Emberson who progressed from the back of the first grid. Pratt jinked ahead twice, only to be gobbled up when its engine cut at Nelson.

RACE WINNERS

Magnificent Sevens
Races 1&2: Christian Pittard (Caterham CSR)

Tin Tops/ Puma Cup
Andrew Windmill (Honda Civic Type R)

Turbo Tin Tops
Carl Chambers (Peugeot 208 GTi)

Slicks Series
Race 1: Colin Turkington (BMW M3 E36 Evo);
Race 2: Colin Turkington/Mark Smith (BMW E36 M3 Evo)

Special Saloons & Modsports
Race 1: Rod Birley (BMW M3 E36)
Race 2: Jack Gadd (Ford Escort RSR)

New Millennium/ Open Series
Mark Lee (Ginetta G55)

Modern Classics
Dave Griffin (BMW M3 E36)

Swinging Sixties Gp1
Sam Polley (Mini Marcos)

Swinging Sixties Gp2
Steve Osborne (Jaguar E-type)

Classic K
Steve Osborne (Jaguar E-type)

Future Classics
Stephen Scott-Dunwoodie (Ford Sierra Cosworth RS500)

Morgan Challenge
Race 1: William Pratt (Plus 4);
Race 2: Tony Kiss (CX Plus 4)

SWINGING SIXTIES

Polley (59) won out after some challenges along the way

Polley reprieved as Hughes falls at the last

The mechanical failure that stopped James Hughes' Frogeye Sprite at Agostini on the final lap of the Swinging Sixties Group 1 contest reprieved Mini Marcos pilot Sam Polley in the battle for the win. Earlier Polley's 10-second lead built over the first three laps was wiped out by a Code 60 while a battered MGB GT was recovered from the Bentley Straight.

Swinging Sixties' 39-strong small-capacity field in Norfolk contained a fine marque miscellany, including marque minnows Fairthorpe and Turner among the sportscars. Ford Anglias and Lotus Cortinas took on four BMWs and Lotus Cortinas in the saloon set.

Top-qualifier Tim Cairns (Sprite) started from the back, having extinguished a fire in the assembly area. As he carved through undaunted and some frontrunners used the early interlude to make their mandatory pitstops, Claire Norman moved her BMW 2002ti from 17th to the front, chased by Adrian Vincent's Alpina version, before Norman relayed father Charles Tippet.

Once the pit stagger unwound, a front- versus rear-wheel-drive battle between Polley and Hughes ensued. When Hughes broke, Polley took the flag 51s clear. Dominic Mooney, in the Alexander Turner Mk2 started by Mike Henney, staved off Connor Kay (MG Midget) for third. Lawrence Claridge's 'Broadspeed' Anglia beat Dutchman Marc Kniese's orange-topped Mini to fourth and tin-top honours.

RACING REPORTS

Photos: Mick Walker

SILVERSTONE: BARC BY MARK PAULSON

MARCH 25-26

Primett (1) scrapped hard for a double win

Jason West in his BMW (76) twice led home strong Classic Thunder fields

PRIMETT AGAIN PRIME IN TOURING BATTLES

Two thrilling Pre-'83 Touring Car races highlighted the British Automobile Racing Club season-opener on the Silverstone Grand Prix circuit, as multiple-champion Stephen Primett fought off the challenges of Will Davison and Jonathan Corker for a double win.

Davison (BMW E30) and Primett (Ford Escort Mk1) exchanged the lead on multiple occasions in the opener as gear-selection issues aboard his Datsun 510 hampered Corker. Primett's decisive move came with a dive at Brooklands, with Davison's moment at Woodcote then providing a crucial buffer.

Corker, who secured third with a late lunge on Mark Cholerton at Brooklands, fitted a spare gearbox for Sunday's race and transformed the previous duel into a three-way scrap.

He twice had spells in front but could not shake off Primett who got inside at Stowe on the final lap to take the win.

Pete Hallford (Ford Mustang) twice took concurrent Pre-'66 honours.

A spin in wet conditions on slick tyres for Richard Wheeler and Anthony Reid's engine failure wiping out the sister Nissan Primeras in Super Tourers cleared the way for Jason Hughes (Vauxhall Vectra) to take the honours.

None started the very wet rematch in which Pre-'93 runner Stuart Waite revelled in the conditions to take his second overall win of the weekend having fought off James Everard (BMW M3 E30) and Pre-'03 winner Gary Prebble (Honda Civic).

A strong Classic Thunder entry was headed in both races by Jason West. Nick Vaughan's Audi A3 and Bryan Bransom (BMW M3) led the chase in the opener but Vaughan skittered into the Copse gravel after challenging for the lead following a safety car and Bransom could not make a move stick.

Bransom briefly led the second race but West was soon back in front after a getting a run through Stowe.

Mike Manning (Ford Sierra RS500) and Mike Seabourne (Jaguar XJS) respectively claimed double wins in BOSS and the Jaguar Challenge that shared the same grid.

Claude Bovet and David McDonald took a first British Endurance Championship win in their new Mercedes-AMG GT3, overcoming the determined challenge of Peter Erceg and Marcus Clutton (Audi R8) in the three-hour race.

Gleb Stepanovs/Stephen Tomkins (Aston Martin Vulcan) were third ahead of Chris Goddard's Ferrari 458 Challenge that he shared with Charlie Hollings and Renault Clio graduate Charlie Hand, while leading TCR runners Ash Woodman and Martin Byford claimed an impressive fifth overall.

Two exciting Britcar Trophy races were both won by the cool head of Axel van Nederveen after his opposition suffered numerous setbacks, often self-inflicted. BMW-powered Bransom and Jasver Sapra could have won both races but for stopping outside the pit window and then failing scrutineering after on-the-road victory in race two.

Will Stacey overcame a pitlane start, track-limits penalty and a poorly timed pitstop to secure two second places in his nippy Lotus Elise.

British Formula 3 National Class champion and ex-IndyCar racer Rodolfo Gonzalez made a victorious return to racing in the new Britcar Prototype Cup racing a Praga R1. Shane Kelly and Teddy Wilson/Ben Stone, also in Pragas, split the other wins.

RACE WINNERS

Pre-'66/Pre-'83 Touring Cars
Races 1 & 2: Stephen Primett (Ford Escort Mk1)

Super Tourers/Pre-'93 & Pre-'03 Touring Cars
Races 1 & 2: Stuart Waite (BMW M3 E36)

Classic Thunder/BOSS/Jaguar Challenge
Races 1 & 2: Jason West (BMW M3 E46)

British Endurance Championship
Claude Bovet/David McDonald (Mercedes-AMG GT3)

Britcar Trophy
Races 1 & 2: Axel Van Nederveen (Ginetta G56 GTA)

Britcar Trophy
Race 1: Rodolfo Gonzalez (Praga R1);
Race 2: Shane Kelly (Praga R1);
Race 3: Teddy Wilson/Ben Stone (Praga R1)

Photo: Gary Craig

KIRKISTOWN: 500MRCI BY RICHARD YOUNG

MARCH 25

FAMILIAR NAMES PROVIDE BIG THRILLS IN NI

In many ways the opening Kirkistown event of 2023 picked up where '22 left off. Lots of familiar names topped the results, it could even have been boring. Except that it wasn't.

In particular the two single-seater classes, Formula Ford and Formula Vee, produced some stunning racing.

The Vees had the largest grids of the day, and excitement all the way. In the first race for Class B and C runners things didn't run entirely to plan, with red flags flying late on after a spinner at the Hairpin was stranded in a dangerous place.

This was unfortunate for teenager Ronan Doherty who fought his way through from 11th place after an early incident to cross the line first, only to be demoted to second behind Sean Newsome when the result was declared for the previous lap. It was nevertheless impressive for a driver in his first-ever race.

Race two had the Class A runners joining, and became an eight-car battle for most of the way. Anthony Cross was ahead at the end followed home by Jack Byrne, Lee Newsome and Gavin Buckley. Fifth, and best of the rest, was Doherty in his second-ever race.

FF1600 had a small field but also intense action. Reigning champion David McCullough and his Van Diemen RF01 occupied their usual pole position twice, with Dave Parks' Ray alongside both times. The pair finished race one two seconds apart, with Historic F2 star Darwin Smith's RF90 third just from Jordan Kelly's younger Van Diemen.

McCullough and Parks did it again in race two, with Rob Parks third home having fought through a pack comprising Smith, Alan Davidson, Kelly and Donal Downey.

The new-for-2023 Mini Cooper category provided plenty too, the mostly novice field providing very grown-up racing. Race one fell to Jack Conachy from Darren Gilmore and Jack's dad Noel, while race two went to Kian O'Brien from Jack Conachy and Shane Henry

There were back-to-back victories for Steven Larkham's Radical in Roadsports, Gavin Stanfield's Subaru in Saloons and Robert Kennedy among the MX-5 brigade. Graham Moore also scored a double among the NI Sevens, as did Michael Graham in a brace of Fiesta encounters. Cameron Fenton and Jack Finlay took Global Lights winners' spoils.

Sean Newsome won the first of two thrilling Vee races

RACE WINNERS

FF1600
Races 1 & 2: David McCullough (Van Diemen RF01)
Saloon/GT
Races 1 & 2: Gavin Stanfield (Subaru Impreza)
Formula Vee
Race 1: Sean Newsome (Sheane FV01);
Race 2: Anthony Cross (Sheane FV94)
Mini Cooper
Race 1: Jack Conachy;
Race 2: Kian O'Brien
Roadsports
Races 1 & 2: Steven Larkham (Radical PR06)
Global GT
Race 1: Cameron Fenton;
Race 2: Jack Finlay
NI Se7ens
Races 1 & 2: Graham Moore (GMS Honda)
Mazda MX-5
Races 1 & 2: Robert Kennedy
Fiesta Zetec
Races 1 & 2: Michael Graham

COLUMNIST

LUKE BROWNING

The reigning GB3 champion is confident for the FIA F3 season following his impressive debut

Photos: Jakob Ebrey, Motorsport Images

Browning has moved to FIA F3 as GB3 champion

Brit Browning (16) battles in Bahrain

The opening weekend of the FIA Formula 3 championship season in Bahrain, my debut in the category, was interesting to say the least. It ended on a high in the feature race as I managed from starting in 17th place to climb to finish fifth, and I could have gone for a podium, but the safety car in the last couple of laps really scuppered our chances. It proves the Hitech Pulse-Eight race car is quick and we're in a strong position for the rest of the season.

I felt qualifying was a shame as I was blocked by traffic on every push lap, and the one lap I didn't push on I was blocked the least. I don't think I had a chance at pole position, losing two or three tenths in the traffic, but I'd more or less backed off and lost another four or five tenths on top of that.

Ultimately that ended up being my fastest lap, so qualifying was probably the worst part of the weekend, coupled with race one. I was coming through the pack in race one, and we had a similar pace as we did in the feature race, but I ended up getting taken out by a rival just after the safety car period, which was disappointing. It wasn't all negatives however, as it was a big learning experience and my first time at such a high level in international racing. I'm trying to catch up as quickly as possible and I'm enjoying it.

The tyre is a lot different to what I was used to in GB3 last season as it really is a one-lap tyre, and the sidewalls feel a bit softer. Inside the car it's a completely different driving style as well. Generally the GB3 car in the high-speed corners is just as quick, it's just the straightline speed that is a big step up in FIA F3.

Going to all these tracks that you don't test at, especially in the FIA F3 car, means it's a little bit more of an equal playing field. One thing that we know for certain is that no-one's raced in Melbourne, the venue of this weekend's round. It's going to be a really good leveller and I'm really excited for it.

We're coming into that round in a good place in the championship, with nine rounds to go. It's going to be about managing expectations and keeping my head throughout the season. There's a silly stat along the lines of 'if you'd finished fifth in every race last year, you would have won the championship by 40 points.' FIA F3 is more of a race of attrition rather than being about do-or-die moves, so considering how bad the first half of the weekend was in Bahrain, to come away still in the top six in the championship is positive. If we can have a good weekend and good qualifying in Melbourne we can look to be in the top three.

I'm almost certain that with the car I have underneath me this year, that if we were to finish every race where we were supposed to be we'd probably win the championship. But it's just the luck coming into it: being in the right part of the grid, not getting stuck in qualifying. It can be very difficult to stop these things from happening.

We're doing all we can, but there are going to be more issues throughout the season and it's going to be about how we deal with them compared to everyone else. You've only got to look at Zane Maloney in FIA F3 last year: he's is undoubtedly one of the quickest drivers on the grid, winning the last three feature races, but he didn't win the championship because of inconsistencies at the start of the year. It was probably the same story in F3 last year for my fellow Hitech driver Isack Hadjar.

I also am a British Racing Drivers' Club SuperStar again this year, and the advice of people such as Derek Warwick and Andy Meyrick has been super helpful at this point of my career. Generally just being in the BRDC is massive, being able to rub shoulders with the members and talk to them is crucial. It helps me with my mindset going into a big season and I am proud to be a part of it.

Browning needs consistency and luck this year

"I'm almost certain if we finish every race where we're supposed to we'll win the championship"

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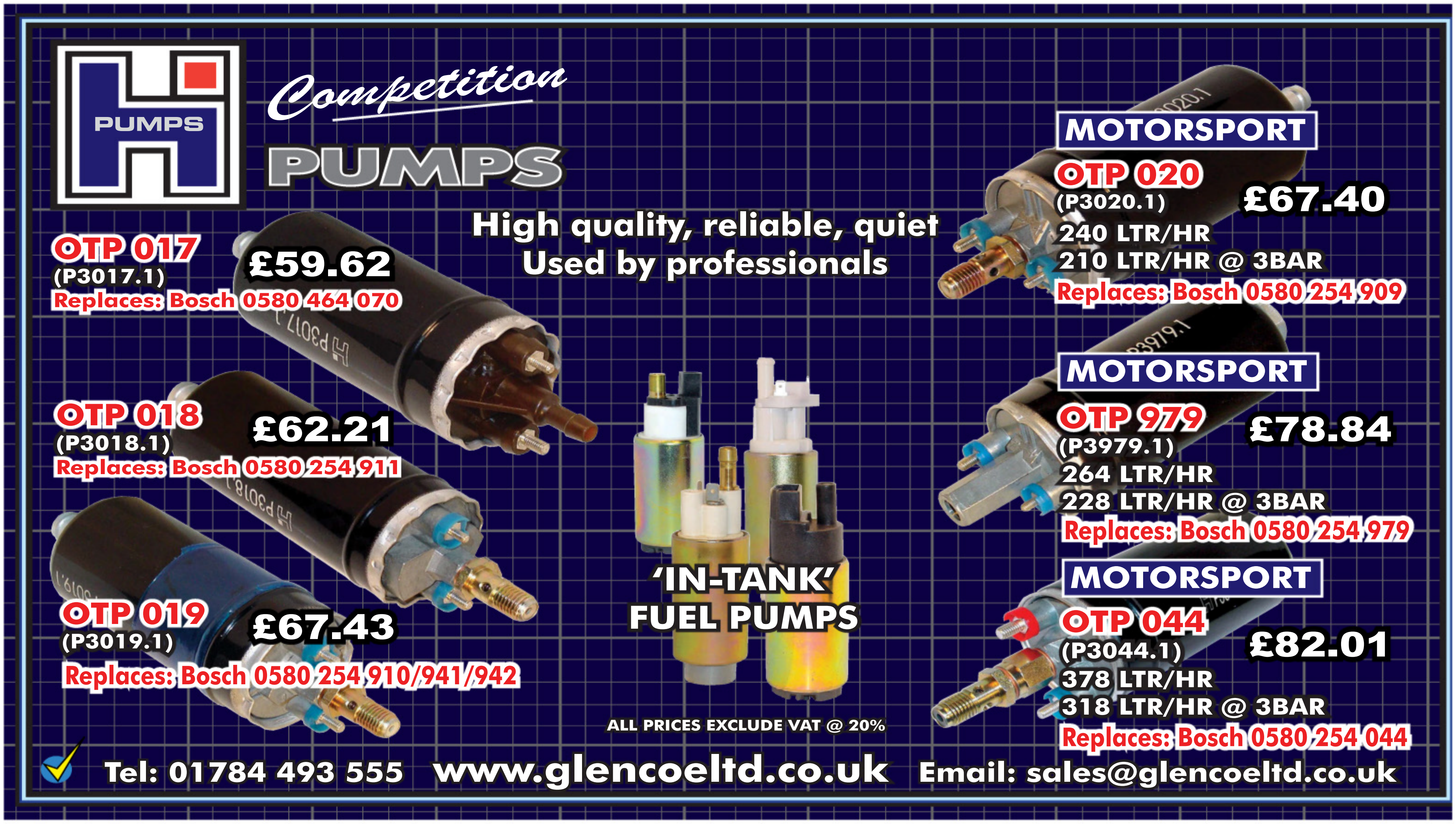

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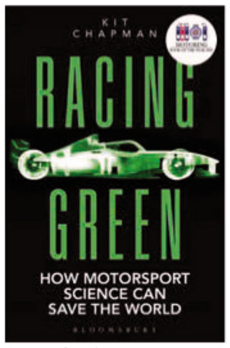
WHAT'S ON

BOOK REVIEW



Easy being green

Racing Green – How Motorsport Science Can Save the World

By Kit Chapman

We like to say motorsport improves the breed. In other words, its vast technological development benefits us all in our road cars and much else besides.

Now with the great challenge of our age of sustainability, science writer – and lifelong motorsport fan – Kit Chapman has sought to plot motorsport's story of how it's boosting the environmentally friendly in his book 'Racing Green'.

His Bloomsbury-published work won the RAC's 2022 Motorsport Book of the Year, and the paperback, released today (Thursday), is yours for a discounted £9.89 at: bloomsbury.com/uk/racing-green-the-rac-motoring-book-of-the-year-9781472982193/.

It's a book that will surprise you, as rather than a textbook it is an engaging work. It is part travelogue – as Chapman literally travels the world to meet those on the technological front line – and part a history of science and motorsport, that also nods to the future.

Chapman goes from the Bonneville Salt Flats' early electric-powered machines all the way to autonomous cars, looking at batteries, aero, braking and much else, via Formula 1, Formula E and elsewhere.

He has great skill as a storyteller and makes what could be impenetrable subjects come to life with accessible and lively explanations.

Graham Keilloh

TV GUIDE

Sky Sports F1 gets us into the mood for this weekend's Australian Grand Prix by showing Melbourne's 2010 race in full this (Thursday) evening at 1830hrs-2045hrs.

With the time differences everything from down under is on early UK time this weekend, so Sky Sports F1's F1 Show preview is shown first on Friday at 0800hrs-0900hrs. It's on Sky Sports Main Event at the same time too.

Ted Kravitz's Notebooks are back, and his qualifying review is on both the F1 and the main Sky Sports channels at 0730hrs-0800hrs on Saturday, while his race review is on the same channels on Sunday at 0900hrs-0930hrs.

Channel 4 meanwhile has its Australian qualifying highlights at 1115hrs-1245hrs on Saturday and its race highlights at 1230hrs-1500hrs on Sunday.

This evening you can watch the dramatic recent Nitro Rallycross season closer from Los Angeles. It's on Viaplay Xtra at 2200hrs-2300hrs, and is shown again throughout the weekend and on Monday.

LIVE TV

Formula 1
Australian Grand Prix
Albert Park
Practice 1: Friday, 0200hrs-0355hrs, Sky Sports F1; 0300hrs-0355hrs, Sky Sports Main Event
Practice 2: Friday, 0545hrs-0715hrs, Sky Sports F1; Sky Sports Main Event
Practice 3: Saturday, 0215hrs-0340hrs, Sky Sports F1; Sky Sports Main Event
Qualifying: Saturday, 0515hrs-0730hrs, Sky Sports F1; Sky Sports Main Event
Race: Sunday, 0430hrs-0900hrs (start time 0600hrs), Sky Sports F1; Sky Sports Main Event

FIA Formula 2
Australia
Practice: Thursday, 2355hrs-0050hrs, Sky Sports F1
Qualifying: Friday, 0715hrs-0800hrs, Sky Sports F1; Sky Sports Main Event
Sprint race: Saturday, 0420hrs-0515hrs, Sky Sports F1; Sky Sports Main Event
Feature race: Sunday, 0230hrs-0345hrs, Sky Sports F1; Sky Sports Main Event

FIA Formula 3
Australia
Practice: Thursday, 2245hrs-2340hrs, Sky Sports F1
Qualifying: Friday, 0355hrs-0435hrs, Sky Sports F1; Sky Sports Main Event
Sprint race: Saturday, 0040hrs-0135hrs, Sky Sports F1
Feature race: Sunday, 0000hrs-0100hrs, Sky Sports F1

IndyCar
Texas
Practice 1: Saturday, 1600hrs-1700hrs, Sky Sports F1
Qualifying: Saturday, 1900hrs-2000hrs, Sky Sports F1
Practice 2: Saturday, 2245hrs-2345hrs, Sky Sports F1
Race: Sunday, 1700hrs-1930hrs, Sky Sports F1

NASCAR
Richmond
Race: Sunday, 2000hrs-0000hrs, Viaplay Sports 1

LISTINGS

RACING
SATURDAY

■ **Oulton Park Intl, Cheshire**
BARC meeting: Caterham Seven, Caterham Seven 310R, Caterham Seven 270R, Caterham Roadsport **Starts** racing from 1050hrs (qualifying from 0830hrs) **Admission** adult £15, under 13 free **Web** msv.com **Contact** 0344 225 4422

SATURDAY-SUNDAY

■ **Donington Park Nat, Leics**
MSVR meeting: GT Cup, United Formula Ford, Radical Cup, Porsche Club, Porsche Club Boxster, Porsche Open/911 Challenge, Focus Cup, Production GTi, Z Cars/New Generation Production BMW, Bell Sport Challenge **Starts** Saturday, racing from 1215hrs (qualifying from 0900hrs) Sunday, racing from 1140hrs (qualifying from 0900hrs) **Admission** adult £17, under 13 free **Web** msv.com **Contact** 0344 225 4422

■ **Brands Hatch Indy, Kent**
MSVR meeting: MG Trophy, Midget and Sprites, BCV8s, MG Cup, Equipe GTS, Equipe Pre '63/'50s, Equipe Libre, Equipe 70s, MG Triple M **Starts** Saturday, racing from 1215hrs (qualifying from 0900hrs) Sunday, racing from 1050hrs (qualifying from 1000hrs) **Admission** adult £15, under 13 free **Web** msv.com **Contact** 0344 225 4422

RALLYING
SATURDAY

■ **Carl Sorenson Stages (Portreath)**
South Hams Motor Club (no spectators)
Web shmc.co.uk

SUNDAY

■ **Alan Healey Memorial Cadwell Park Stages**
Border Motor Club (spectators admitted)
Web bordermotorclub.co.uk

■ **Tour of Caerwent**
Forresters Car Club (no spectators)
Web forresterscarclub.co.uk

■ **Circuit of Kerry Rally (IRL)**
Kerry Motor Club (spectators admitted)
Web kerrymotorclub.com

Details correct at time of going to press, please check with organisers before travelling

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ART EDITOR MIKE STOKOE'S
FAVOURITE OF THE WEEK!

Daniel Lowson went to the British GT media day at Donington Park and snapped this

David Harbey captured these battling GT cars

Mazda mayhem, from Bob Sketchley

Dean Chilvers' shot from Saudi Arabia

Another from David Harbey, from Donington

NEXT EDITION OUT THURSDAY, APRIL 6

IN IT FOR THE LONG HAUL

We look ahead to this season's British GT battles

WHO WILL CONQUER CADWELL PARK?

The Circuit Rally contenders take on the Lincolnshire track

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